

Youth ! Arise, Awake and Adopt the Right Path of Life

(A compact Self-Guide for the modern students and youth on the "Right Path of Life" for laying a proper and strong foundation of life during their youth period and for living a successful, purposeful, prosperous, happy and peaceful human life upon this earth plane)

Volume - 13

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This book is meant for free distribution amongst the modern students and youth, with a fervent prayer to them to kindly study the book earnestly and carefully and put the knowledge gained from the teachings contained in the lessons of the book into practice in their day-to-day life sincerely and diligently, for their own highest good and supreme welfare.

Views of Students and Youth, Teachers and Professors, Educationists and Academicians, School, College and University Administrators, Editors of News Papers and all other Readers, on this book are humbly and earnestly invited in the following address:-

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LESSON - 16

DIVINE LIFE (DIVYA JEEVANA)

DIVINE LIFE (DIVYA JEEVANA)

1. ESSENCE OF DIVINE LIFE

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

To speak the truth at all events, to speak sweetly with love, to practise non-violence and continence, to behold the One Lord in all beings, is Divine Life.

Love, truth and purity form the foundation of the edifice of Divine Life.

Character and devotion are the bricks and mortar, with which you have to construct the walls of the Temple of Divine Life.

The Temple of Divine Life has four pillars, viz., meditation, purity, love and righteousness in action.

Through the means of service, love and meditation, Divine Life is lived.

The secret of Divine Life lies in the spirit of service and sacrifice.

No philosophy or religion in the world can teach anything better than: "Serve, love, give, purify, meditate, realise. Be good; do good."

Purify your heart. Purity is the very essence of religion.

Mortifying the body is not Divine Life.

Physical nudity and matted locks have nothing to do with Divine Life.

Divine Life is not a rejection of life and its activities, but a transformation of it into the Divine Being.

The path of duty is the path of righteousness, and the path of righteousness is the only path of everlasting peace and happiness.

Aspire ceaselessly to live in the Divine. Strive ceaselessly to realise the truth.

Work untiringly for the good of others.

To have faith and devotion, to serve the preceptor and the

saints, to practise meditation, and to attain Self-knowledge is indeed a supreme blessing.

Without self-restraint there is no Divine Life.

Do not mix much with people, but be friendly to all.

Children of Immortality! Arise, awake and lead the Divine Life of truth, purity, love and goodness.

Be merciful to all. Be kind to all. Love all. Renounce sensual pleasures. Meditate on the Supreme Being. This is Divine Life.

The world is a composite whole. Do not entertain the spirit of separateness. In your heart and mind, be one with all.

The individual soul has to merge in the Cosmic Self. Human life has to transform itself into Divine Life. This is the Goal.

Find out your centre. Dwell always in this centre. This centre is the Atman, your innermost being.

Realise your real nature. Realise your Atman. A lion should not bleat like a lamb.

Do not be pessimistic. Do not be negative in your approach. Be always optimistic and positive.

Your only duty is God-realisation. All other duties should only serve as a means to this final goal.

Put aside sorrow and grief. Identify not yourself with the perishable body and mind. You are the immortal Atman. Why should you grieve, when your real nature is joy eternal?

To get established in the Self, to do charitable and noble deeds, to be pure at heart, — this is indeed a supreme blessing.

Spiritualise your activities. Dedicate all your actions as an offering to God. Practise detachment and self-surrender. Live in God. Awake from the slumber of ignorance. Be dispassionate. Learn to discriminate. Meditate. Sleep no more! Behold the dawn of wisdom in your heart.

Lift the veil of human imperfections. Behold your real divine nature.

Seek first the spiritual kingdom within you.

Realise fully the message of the unity of life and the divine purpose behind it.

Stick to the fundamental principles of a noble life. Re-orient them to suit the changing times and conditions.

Never compromise on your fundamental principles.

Unfold all the latent potentialities of your soul through leading the Divine Life.

Escape from the world is not the solution, but freedom from worldliness.

Live in agreement with Nature. Use your discriminative faculty. You will be happy, healthy and wise.

Swerve not from the path, whatever be the distractions and unfavourable circumstances which you may have to face. Be rooted in the ideal. The struggle may be difficult in the beginning, but later you will reap a rich harvest.

Allow not wealth to harden your heart. It should be utilised for the good of others.

Be a servant of the poor, a lover of the poor, a devotee of the poor, a brother of the poor, a helper of the poor, a healer of the poor. Your life will be blessed.

The greedy, the proud and the covetous have no peace. The contented and the humble enjoy the blessing of peace.

Give; charity creates the feeling of oneness.

Give a little of cold water to the thirsty; give a few grains of food to the hungry; speak a few kind words to the afflicted. The Lord will bless you.

Seek to live with all in love and kindness, for who knows where or in what guise will the Lord Himself come to you?

Be a friend to the animals; serve the animals. The Lord dwells in all creatures.

If you can always remember that God is watching all your thoughts and actions, you will not entertain evil thoughts or do evil actions.

Whatever you eat or drink, or whatever you do, offer it first to the Lord.

Cooperate with the divine forces, and work for the promotion of peace and harmony.

Be not dogmatic and fanatic; be catholic, broad minded, tolerant and all-inclusive.

If the brute in you triumphs, love will have no scope to flourish.

Trust in the love and wisdom of God. You will be free from fear and worry.

A man of discrimination is always careful, vigilant and circumspect. He always watches his thoughts carefully.

Repentance is asking for the forgiveness of the Lord with real tears of grief and imposing some discipline on oneself in the form of Tapas.

By feeling the Lord's presence everywhere, you can become fearless, and enjoy infinite peace and bliss.

Rise above all sects, cults and creeds. Sectarianism is the antithesis of spiritual life.

The sure way to Perfect Life is pointed out in the Gita. The message of the Gita is the Yoga of Synthesis, with special emphasis on any one of the particular aspects of Yoga chosen according to the temperament of the aspirant.

Disseminate the message of equality, unity and cosmic love.

Dissemination of spiritual knowledge is the noblest form of service to humanity.

Spiritual enlightenment can only come from those who have attained such enlightenment within themselves. The blind cannot lead the blind. One who has seen the Light, alone, can show the Light to others.

Only he is called great, who is merciful, who is endowed with self-restraint, righteousness and wisdom, who radiates joy and peace, who sheds divine light and works to lift up people from the

quagmire of Samsara.

The perfect man is a beautiful combination of the head, the heart and the hand.

As the rivers flow into the ocean, so may you flow to the Absolute, the ocean of bliss immortal, where there is no diversity, no disharmony, no imperfection.

Two letters lead to death; three letters lead to immortality. *Mama* (mine) leads to death; *Na-mama* (not-mine) leads to immortality.

Desire nothing. Fear nothing.

Sparks of the Divine Flame! Back to the Divine Flame! Be one with the Divine Flame.

Meditate on this formula: "Nothing exists; nothing belongs to me; I am neither body nor mind. The Immortal Self I am."

2. DIVINE LIFE

(SWAMI CHIDANANDA)

Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj appeared in this 20th Century to proclaim to mankind his sublime message of Divine Life. According to him, such a life is divine that is lived in the awareness that you are essentially an eternal and imperishable divine spirit, you are immortal Atman, you are not this perishable cage of flesh and bones, you are not merely this restless and impure mind filled with selfishness, anger, hatred, passion, greed, cravings, etc. Neither are you this limited and finite intellect, which is many a time prone to error and fails you at the time of need in solving your problems. But beyond body, senses, mind and intellect, you shine resplendent as an Eternal and Immortal Spirit. Satchidananda (Existence Absolute, Consciousness Absolute, Bliss Absolute) is your real nature, because you are an eternal part of that Supreme Universal Spirit whom we refer to as God. He is the Cosmic Being, the eternal source and origin of your very existence and you are inseparably connected with Him in the inner dimension of your real nature, your spiritual nature, which is in fact your true identity.

Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji beheld the state of restlessness in which mankind dwelt in this modern world with its insecurity, with its clash and conflict, discord and disharmony. In spite of having material wealth and opulence, man was not happy, he had no peace, he was ever restless and he was ever unhappy and unsatisfied. Master Swami Sivanandaji was a cosmic friend and benefactor and out of his over-whelming love and compassion for all beings, he decided to show them the path to blessedness in and through the normal life in this world and this path is the path of Divine Life.

The message of Divine Life calls upon mankind to realize that you are only a passing pilgrim here upon this planet earth. This is not your eternal dwelling Place. You come from an abode of Eternal Peace, Joy and sunshine, a divine abode beyond all sorrow, pain and suffering where there is eternal peace and supreme Bliss. Due

to Karma, the force of the great Law of Karma, temporarily you have come into this state of physical embodiment. The meaning and purpose of this earth life is that it is a golden opportunity, a rare chance given to you to utilize it in order to once again regain your temporarily lost connection with the Supreme Universal Being, who is of the very nature of Bliss and Peace. It is to make use of this life for this process of regaining your lost contact with the Divine, that all the saints and sages have come and taught us the way to attain God-consciousness and God-experience, by which one passes beyond all sorrow and becomes established in a state of absolute Divine Bliss and is for ever liberated from all pain, suffering, fear and bondage. That state of liberation is called Moksha . This is the supreme goal of life. Moksha means *sarva duhkha nivritti, paramananda prapti* and *nitya tripti*, that is, liberation from all pain, sorrow and suffering and attainment of supreme Divine Bliss and eternal satisfaction in that state of liberated consciousness.

To attain this, Gurudev showed to mankind an easy path which can be practised even while one is living in this world, fulfilling all one's obligations to one's dependents and doing one's duties and engaging in activity which is inevitable to this secular existence in this materialistic world. In and through this world and in and through this secular life to attain that supreme God-experience which is the summum bonum of life for the supreme goal of human existence, that is the purpose of Divine Life. Divine Life is a life lived in the awareness that you are essentially divine, that you are not this perishable cage of flesh and bones, but your real identity is something supra-mundane, which is without beginning and without end, which is timeless and eternal, which is without birth and death, which is imperishable, indestructible and immortal. Thou art the Immortal Soul. Thou art the Eternal Imperishable Atman. Lord Krishna declares, '*ajo nityah sasvatoyam purano na hanyate hanyamane sarire*'— Unborn, Eternal, Permanent and Timeless is this dweller within the body and He is not affected by the birth or death of the body. Weapons cannot injure you, fire cannot burn you, water cannot

wet you, wind cannot dry you. You are therefore the Eternal, Immortal Atman.

To live in this awareness is the basis of Divine Life. Divine Life is also lived in the awareness that your source and origin is that Eternal Cosmic Being, Infinite Existence, Eternal Bliss and Peace whom we call God. He is the basis of all religions. He is the source and origin of all religions. He is the goal of all religions. Even though called by different names as Brahman or Atman or Jehova or Ahura Mazda or Father in Heaven or Allah, Ek Omkar Satnam, that Supreme Cosmic Reality is One and non-dual. It is that Reality which is worshipped in all places of worship: Hindu temple, Jewish synagogue, Christian church, Islamic mosque and Gurudwara of the Sikhs. It is One Being, glorified in all the scriptures of the world. To attain That Being is the supreme goal and purpose of life. Divine Life proclaims that the goal of life is God-realization, attaining which one becomes liberated from rebirth and all sorrow, pain and suffering. To lead this Divine Life, you need not renounce your house and family, property and profession, you need not run away into some forests or mountain top and live in a cave. Even living as you are, leading your normal life of domestic set up and your professional life and activities and your social life, you can attain this supreme goal and become forever blessed.

To attain this, the way of Divine Life shown by Gurudev is first and foremost to purify your heart and rid it of the dross and rubbish and impurity of selfishness by plunging into absolute dedicated selfless service. Be a Maha Paropakari. Ever be intent, ever be eager in order to serve all: to serve the sick, to serve the poor, to serve the suffering and sorrowful, to encourage those who are in despair and feel yourself to be blessed if you get an opportunity of serving, helping and not only your fellow beings, but all creatures of God upon this earth. By thus renouncing selfishness and engaging in motiveless, desireless, selfless service, one's heart becomes purified and in such a pure heart, there arises devotion for God and with the devotion, engage yourself in daily worshipping the Supreme who is the very basis of your being, who is the very innermost core

of your consciousness and who is the very centre of your existence.

God is not some supra-mundane remote reality, far away from you, but God is here and now. He is the all-pervading Reality, the ever present Divine Spirit pervading this entire Universe and also He is your innermost , He is the Antaryamin. He is closer to you than your very breath. Never forget this and therefore, out of a heart filled with love for Him engage in prayer and worship every day. Thus, try to re-establish a living connection, a living link and relationship of spiritual love with the supreme source of your being in God. And this process of daily worshipping and praying to the Lord has the power to gradually steady the restless mind and overcome its fickle nature. It removes the Vikshepa Sakti of the mind, steadies the mind and gradually brings about the state of restfulness and concentration in the mind. At this stage you enter into the third practice of Divine Life namely withdrawing the mind and controlling the senses and controlling the thoughts and attaining to a state of concentration and with a concentrated mind, meditating upon the Supreme Divine Reality or God. Daily meditation.

Selfless service is the foundation of Divine Life. Devotion and worship bring about a progress and an upward and Godward ascent in your life. As devotion and prayerfulness intensifies itself, the mind attains a state of concentration and you enter into a state of regular daily meditation upon the divine object of your quest. Regular daily meditation brings about steadiness and a feeling of abidance in God. You begin to feel the presence of God in your heart. And the power of meditation is such that even when you are engaged in your daily activities, either at home or in your professional field or in society — it creates a steady, unbroken under-current of ‘God thought’ or ‘God awareness’. This is the effect of regular of meditation.

When you begin to feel the presence of God, you become aware of the presence of God at all times, everywhere even in the midst of your activities. You begin to feel that you live, move and have your being in God. This is the power of meditation. It brings about in your life God-awareness and also it brings about in your

thoughts, words and activities a new spiritual quality, which uplifts and elevates your life to a new standard of purity, of spirituality, of compassion, of kindness and holiness. Thus, you become a transformed being, a spiritual being with purity of character, with sublime sentiments, with spiritual emotions and lofty thoughts of the Divine. And having entered into this state of God-awareness, your intellect becomes purified and within it, dawns the power of spiritual enquiry, philosophical enquiry and discrimination — discrimination between the Eternal and the non-eternal, the changeless Eternal Reality and the merely passing appearance, Atman and the Anatman, the Permanent and the passing, the Reality and the appearance, the Eternal and the non-eternal.

This process of discrimination or Viveka should be carried on all the waking hours of your every day life. Thus, through constant discrimination, you begin to reject that which is unspiritual and undivine, you begin to reject the passing, changeful appearances of this phenomenal world and you begin to direct your mind towards the Reality, which is behind and beyond all this world play, this show of vanishing names and forms. The mind begins to move towards the Eternal Reality even though physically and mentally you continue to live in this material world, you continue to function in this phenomenal process, yet, deep within you, in your Spirit, you become established in Supreme Divine Reality.

And thus, the four great practices which beloved and Holy Master Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji proclaimed as pillars of Divine Life are selfless service, devotion and worship, daily, unfailing regular meditation and constant spiritual enquiry, discrimination and investigation into the nature of the Reality which is behind and beyond this world of vanishing names and forms. The way of Divine Life which leads to inner spiritual unfoldment and God-experience and grants you supreme bliss, peace and illumination is the way of selflessness and selfless service. It is the way of devotion and daily Worship. It is the way of disciplining the mind and controlling the senses, withdrawing the mind from being scattered amongst the external objects of this world and concentrating the mind

and meditation. It is the way of ceaseless enquiry: ‘Who am I? What am I? Whence am I in this universe of these perishable objects? What is my destination and goal in life and what is the nature of this universe of these perishable objects?’ It is the way of ceaseless spiritual enquiry into the real nature of this world appearance and your ultimate goal. It is the way of affirming ‘I am not this body, I am not this restless mind, I am not this limited, finite intellect. I am that innermost being, the Supreme Atman, nameless and formless, unborn, undecaying, deathless and imperishable, eternal, one and non-dual. I am Satchidananda’. This is the way of Divine Life. But, if you wish to enter into this spiritual way of Divine Life of selfless service, daily worship, regular meditation and ceaseless enquiry, discrimination and self-realization, you have to observe three principles in your conduct and character, and your day to day vyavahara, day to day life in the secular world. These three principles form the very foundation and basis of this Divine Life of service, worship, meditation and God-realisation. These three principles are therefore indispensable pre-requisites for the practise of the Sadhana of Divine Life.

The first principle is kindness and compassion towards all creatures. You must be a Cosmic benefactor. Ceaseless love, kindness and compassion must flow out of your life. Never hurt anyone, never hurt even the least of God’s creatures either by thought, word or action. Even in dream, you should not think of harming or hurting any creature. This sublime principle of non-injury, of harmlessness has been given a very great place in the eternal Vedic Way of life, that proclaim ‘Ahimsa paramo dharmaḥ’. Be a centre of help, be a centre of benefit, be a centre of happiness and peace to all. Never injure, never hurt, never harm any living creature.

The second principle is: be rooted in absolute Truthfulness. Even at the cost of life, never utter falsehood, never practise deceit, never be dishonest in any of your dealings with anyone in this world. Be a man of integrity and verity. Become a man established in truthfulness in thought, word and deed. Truth is God. One who practises truthfulness rigidly will attain God and become established

in God even without much rigorous Yogic Sadhana and techniques, for God is present in this human world as the sublime principle of truthfulness.

Thirdly, and most importantly, purity of conduct and character, of self-control, chastity, a chaste look, purity of vision, purity of feeling towards all beings, Brahmacharya and overall control over the base carnal passions that exist in the lower physical aspect of your being. Thus self-control and purity of thought, word and deed, a sublime purity of character and conduct, ethical living, absolute truthfulness in all dealings and above all kindness and compassion towards all creatures—these three form the basis and foundation of such Divine Life. Ever keep in mind, the great Goal, remember God constantly with love in your heart and have absolute faith in your inseparable relationship with the Supreme Divine Being. Cultivate constant remembrance of God by seeing His invisible presence in, and through all things in this universe around you. The Lord is present as an immanent principle in all creation.

In the eleventh Chapter of Srimad Bhagavad Gita, in the wonderous and marvellous manner God gives the supreme experience to Arjuna through His Visvarupa Darsana Yoga and through that supreme vision, he has granted to us a rare and priceless treasure of this truth that God is present, immanent in this Universe and fills every speck of space and every atom of matter in this world. Thus, be constantly in a state of awareness, do all your actions as a worship offered to this ever-present Divine Presence. Dedicate all your activities to God by saying ‘Brahmarpanam; Krishnarpanam’ — O Lord, all the activities of my entire life, I offer up unto Your feet as my perennial prayer of ceaseless worship. Thus, living your Divine Life, work becomes worship, to act becomes to adore. The very living of your life becomes a prayer. Come! Arise! Move towards this great experience. Lead Divine Life in daily life and attain supreme blessedness. Even as I talk to you and you listen, you are Existence, Consciousness, Bliss Absolute, you are the ever-perfect Atman, you are Satchidananda, you are a part of God. That is your true consciousness. Living in this awareness is Divine Life.

3. DIVINE LIFE (SWAMI CHIDANANDA)

Blessed immortal seekers! Glorious rays of the Eternal Divine Light! Friends! I greet you in the name of my Master, the great Master, Swami Sivananda, and I greet you in Divine Life.

To such of you who are new to this type of gathering, who have come here for the first time today, I extend my warmest welcome and I express my love and greetings — especially to the people who are attending for the first time.

In this Divine Life gathering, we make it a special point to see that our meetings are thrown open to all groups. Ours is a group which embraces in itself every group that seeks God, and we identify ourselves with all seekers, absolutely, without any thought or reservation. It is quite immaterial whether they belong to any specific religion, faith or church or not. So, here are welcome Hindus, Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Parsis, even people who have not found anything yet but who are seeking something, seeking peace, happiness, seeking a nobler way of life, seeking upliftment of soul, the improvement of their total nature — this is a group which welcomes all such seekers. Therefore the absolutely non-denominational name “The Divine Life Group”. We welcome all people who aspire for the Divine. We welcome all people who live to seek the Divine and who seek to live divinely, and therefore, in the name of Divine Life, my warmest and cordial greeting and welcome to you all once again.

WHAT IS DIVINE LIFE?

Divine Life is life lived in the awareness of your divine destiny. Divine Life is life lived in the full consciousness of your true divine nature, in the knowledge that you are not a body and a mind, but an eternal, all-pure and perfect spiritual being. That is the innermost central truth of your being; that is the true fact of your real nature. You are divine. You are spiritual. Therefore you are imperishable and ever-perfect. You partake of the nature of the eternal and inexhaustible source of your being, viz., God, even as every ray of

the sun partakes of the sun’s radiant and luminous nature. As is the source, so is the emanation. Therefore, as God is divine, ever-pure and perfect, whatever emanates from Him is also divine, ever-pure and ever-perfect, is also of the very nature of indescribable bliss and supreme peace. A life lived in the awareness of this true nature of yours is Divine Life. A life constantly lived in order to express this divine nature of yours through all your thoughts, sentiments and feelings, through all your spoken utterances and, more important than anything else, through all your actions, your practical life — such is Divine Life.

This Divine Life is the great need of the world today, not only of the individuals that live in the world, but of all nations and communities, all groups of people, all races and countries that are trying to evolve in today’s world. For, in such an effort to express the higher nature that is within man, lies hope of the emergence of a better world from this war-torn and troubled times of ours, from this great and eventful age filled with so much wonderful achievement and advancement, but at the same time oppressed with so much of distrust, mutual suspicion, discontent, hatred and strife. Divine Life is, indeed, the great answer — individually and collectively — to this vexing problem of world discord and the great solution to this problem of a total breakaway from spiritual values.

This Divine Life is the one message of the great Master Swami Sivananda; this Divine Life is the great way of life which he had been trying ceaselessly to spread throughout the modern world.

Divine Life is a life of divinity in practice. Divine Life is a life of our divine nature expressed in divine thoughts, divine work and divine action. It is, as it were, an expression of the spiritual man through the human man upon the plane of this physical world. This Divine Life should be lived both inwardly as an ascent into its all-full perfection, and also outwardly as beauty, as love, as goodness, as peace, as humility, as selflessness, as the spirit of service, for all these great qualities are part and parcel of the ever-perfect divine

nature which lies within you and awaits to be unfolded and made manifest by your wise conscious effort.

The man of Divine Life seeks to live for a great ideal. The man of Divine Life is a peace-maker, for he beholds the essential spiritual oneness of all mankind. He knows that the one great divine essence knits all life into a great oneness and thus ever tries to see the whole world as a manifest expression of the Divine Essence, and thus deals with all with reverence and love. He sees God in man and thus seeks to live worshipfully. He seeks to give love as his worship to his immanent Divinity.

A person who practises this Divine Life, therefore, spreads love, mutual regard and respect. He works for goodwill and understanding and he ever seeks to bring greater spiritual harmony. The person living the Divine Life, wherever he goes, will make people feel the oneness of life and the spirit of brotherhood. The follower of Divine Life is a great example of selflessness and service. This is the outward aspect of the inward spiritual transformation which everyone seeks to bring about through Yoga, through practical religion, through prayer and worshipfulness, through the life spiritual.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HUMAN BIRTH

The Supreme Self illuminates everything, but is overlooked in apparent appearances. When the great Atman is like the absolute void — nameless and formless — there is no creation. The world is not then, and there is no universe either. There is no matter and no motion, but only absolute, ineffable stillness. There is no matter and no motion, but only Pure Consciousness. And then the Pure Consciousness sets itself into motion as an act of the Absolute Will Divine. This motion brings into being subtle matter or Prakriti, as the Indian philosophy terms it. Then, from Prakriti, the universe comes into being. From the Atman or Supreme Spirit is light. From the Supreme is desire. From the Supreme is love. From the Supreme are all the elements from ether down to water. The Supreme sustains the physical world as physical proof. Even the broad sky above and the boundless ocean around remind you of the Supreme Absolute Spirit.

From the Supreme Absolute come the countless universes; yet the Pure Consciousness remains absolutely unaffected. The sun's rays fall on the pure water of the Ganges, on the ocean, on streams, pools and ponds and on dirty puddles, but the sun is not at all affected in any way by this contact. Even so, the Absolute being is totally unaffected by the later evolutes, such as the countless universes. The world and the universes, however, continue to exist because of the divine motion set by the Pure Consciousness through the Absolute Will.

Motion or energy is not different from Pure Consciousness; it is only Pure Consciousness expressed or made manifest. Motion or energy cannot exist without matter to play upon; therefore the subtle matter or Prakriti was first created.

The subtle matter, the transcendental matter or Prakriti, was whirled into motion in its three qualities and it divided itself into various grosser entities. The grosser entities became still more grosser and found themselves as different universes. From the universes were created worlds. In the worlds, there evolved the various forms of life. The universal motion or consciousness found at last its expression in the human being, the last species to evolve upon the worlds. In the human being was created the mind. Mind thus became the most powerful agency of perception, discernment and understanding.

At first the human mind was gross — only instinctive, a little more efficient than that of the animal; but, as evolution progressed, it gradually started refining itself. When a higher stage of evolution was reached by the mind of man, there came the separate awareness of the lower mind and the higher mind. The lower mind identified itself with gross matter. The limited consciousness was thus identified, but the higher mind ever sought the eternal. It was dissatisfied with the limitation, bondage and imprisonment and thus started the quest of the discovery of the real nature of being. When that is realized, the cycle is completed, the consciousness which limited itself in the human form having become freed, having once again merged in its infinite, all-perfect, absolute, original source. This is the cycle. This

is the true meaning of your human nature, of your human birth. Complete the cycle and culminate in spiritual glory. To lead the Divine Life is the secret of bringing about this achievement in a conscious way here and now.

This message becomes especially significant to you who are listening to me today, because today, the 2nd of October, is the birthday anniversary of one of the greatest of India's spiritual men of this century — one who embodied in himself such a divine life of ever seeking to reach and realize the Reality. And this man was the venerable Mahatma Gandhi. You all know the father of the Indian nation, the architect of Indian independence, the saintly man who developed the great theory and technique of non-violence — the technique of overcoming hatred through love. He was the twentieth century version of the great and benign Buddha of three thousand years ago. Mahatma Gandhi was a living embodiment of divine life and I wish to speak a few words upon how he exemplified this divine life in his own person; and that, I think, would indeed be a very fitting tribute to him on this day of his birth anniversary.

In India there are celebrations going on right at this moment in honour of Mahatma Gandhi's birthday, for the Mahatma is still regarded not merely as a politician, but as a worshipful sage who once again revived the ancient message of the great Indian sages — the message of Dharma. Dharma implies a life based upon ethics, a life based upon prayer, a life based upon a living faith in God, a life of truth. Thus, Mahatma Gandhi was the modern representative of the great sages who gave us our cultural idealism, and in his name, I wish to place before you a little thumb-nail sketch, as it were, of the great Gandhian pattern of life.

MAHATMA GANDHI AS A SPIRITUAL SEEKER

Mahatma Gandhi said at a certain stage of his life: "Those who think me to be a politician and those who think that my business is politics have really not understood me at all. They have totally missed the real being in me. I am a seeker or nothing at all. The truth about my life is my seeking, my quest for God. Politics is only

an incidental part of my life".

Gandhi was ever seeking after the great Reality and this seeking started right in his little boyhood. He was a deeply devoted son of very religious and pious parents and he got the habit of repeating Ram Nam even when he was a little boy going to secondary school, and his seeking developed and took the form of service of the living God in the poor millions of India and, as India was at that time going through a political phase, his service took the form of political agitation for the welfare of his people. To Mahatma Gandhi it was all a part and parcel of his worship of God in and through man, in and through the suffering people of India, in and through his poor brethren, and thus it was a Sadhana to him.

Gandhi's life was based absolutely upon the ideal of truth, purity and compassion and his was the path of service. In his life we see the ideals of self-discipline, of ceaseless inward striving, of moderation, and a sublime simplicity, the parallel of which the world has seldom seen except perhaps in the life of Christ. Many have called him the modern Christ. Many have called him the modern St. Francis, the modern Buddha. He has been a source of great inspiration to the whole of the modern world and the world will hear much more about him in the decades to come in this century.

The source of Mahatma Gandhi's great spiritual force was not the great following he had, for he lived a life dedicated to poverty and he had nothing which he called his own. The source of his spiritual force was his constant unbroken contact with God. How did he maintain such contact? Through daily prayer and the Divine Name. Not a single day passed without his setting aside all activity, without his turning away from all secular activity at the hour of twilight. When the sun had set, Gandhi was found always in the middle of his little prayer group, perhaps under a spreading Banyan tree, in some peaceful spot, in the corner of some compound or on a little wooden platform or stage, totally oblivious of the rest of the world and totally merged in a wonderful peace and sweetness of inward communion with God.

His prayer meetings were extraordinary. The vision of

universalism in his approach to God was something of an object lesson to every one. His prayer contained portions of the Koran recited in Arabic, portions of the *Zendavesta* of the Parsis recited in their own Persian tongue, portions of Japanese prayer recited in the Japanese language, the Sanskrit hymns of the *Vedas*, portions from the Testament and the Lord's Prayer. Thus, practically every religion came to be represented in Mahatma Gandhi's daily evening prayer.

There was a period of silence and all sank into meditation. There was a group chant of the Divine Name, and then, coming out of his silence, meditation and communion, Mahatma Gandhi gave a short message of five or ten minutes to the people, and always it was filled with spirituality, vibrant with a living quality which came out of this ever-fresh contact that he maintained with the Supreme Being through such daily prayer.

Gandhi was essentially a man of prayer. He had his roots in faith and in daily prayer. He said, "Prayer is the real bread of my life. But for prayer, I would not find it possible even to live". The secret of all his great achievements, of the strenuous life which he led, was the Divine Name. The Divine Name was Gandhi's constant strength and support. He never parted from the Divine Name — the Name of Ram. To him, born as a Hindu, it was Ram, but essentially it was the Divine Name which was always on his lips and which was ever an under-current of his life, which few suspected and fewer knew; and only a few among those who knew understood its true significance.

All the activity of Mahatma Gandhi was activity centred in God by absolute detachment to the world and deep inward attachment to the Lord through love, worshipfulness, prayer and the spiritual link — the constantly repeated Divine Name. God was the ultimate value for Mahatma Gandhi in all his life. Not even political attainment, but God and God alone was the ultimate value in his life. He was the centre, He was the goal, He was the object of his quest, He was the object of all his life thus nobly lived. All this divine life of

Mahatma Gandhi's was but a constant seeking, through activity, through service of his people, through service of the Divine Spirit that he knew and felt to indwell all people.

SPIRITUALIZE YOUR ACTIVITIES

Spiritualize your activities. To live a divine life, offer all your actions — even reading, talking, playing tennis — to the Lord. Feel that the whole world is indwelt by Him. Feel that all your children are manifestations of the Lord. Serve humanity with such inward spiritual feeling. Then all your daily activities will be transformed into spiritual exercises. They will be transformed into Yoga.

Every day, side by side with your duties, you have to keep up this inward contact, this link with the Divine Source, through prayer, worship and silent meditation. This is your foremost duty. This should not be neglected on any account. Get up a little earlier in the morning and practice contemplation. Practise a few Yoga poses — do not neglect the body — and a few breathing exercises. Study sacred books. This inward silence and meditation is most important. Early morning, as the time for spiritual practice, is equally important. Silent meditation in the morning (even for a few minutes) and in the evening, at dusk, is very important. Be alert — do not neglect this.

Have a background of thought, thought of the Lord, thought of your divine ideal. Everyone has some background of thought or the other, but usually it is just worldly or sordid and material. A barrister or advocate has a background of thought filled with clients, courts, sections of the law, etc. The background of thought of a doctor is about his dispensary, injections, patients, medicines, fees. The background of thought of a grandmother is about her grandchildren and sons. The background of thought of a practitioner of Divine Life should be concerned with the glorious ideal of divine attainment, with God, with a life of goodness, with the Divine name. Cultivate divine qualities; eradicate negative ones. Change your mental attitude towards the world, towards everything. Waste not even a single moment of your precious time. Think and talk of the ideal, of the good life, of God, of Divine Life. Live for God. Spread

the message of Divine Life to one and all you meet in the course of your daily activities. When you meet some friend, do not talk shop, rather ask what type of meditation is being done or the latest spiritual literature being studied—let this be your conversation. Let everything about you be noble and divine. Let everything about you be lofty. Give up idle gossiping. Abandon novel reading. Idle gossiping and novel reading will not give you mental peace. They disturb your mental equilibrium. They fill your mind with unnecessary, painful, worldly thoughts. Fill your mind, instead, with lofty divine thoughts. Let your inward being glow with divine radiance. Let purity permeate it. Remember always that this world is one of pain and old age and death and that your foremost duty is to complete the cycle, to realize God, to realize the Self, where alone you can find direct peace, eternal joy, eternal light.

Gird up your loins and apply yourself to the living of this Divine Life. Be a practical seeker. You will attain immortality. You will enjoy supreme peace, eternal joy. There is no doubt about it.

May God bless you all with health, long life, peace, prosperity, eternal bliss, success in all your undertakings, brilliant career, all-fullness and supreme divine blessedness, supreme felicity.

ELEMENTS OF DIVINE LIFE IN A NUTSHELL

I will close now with a little song in which the Master sums up the elements of divine living, of Divine Life and the virtues which one should cultivate in order to support Divine Life.

The elements of Divine Life are purity, selflessness, spirit of service, love (love of man and love of God), regular meditation, inward life, and ultimately, realization of the Absolute. Therefore, the Master sings about Divine Life:

“Serve, love, give, purify, meditate, realize,
Be good, do good, be kind, be compassionate.
Inquire ‘Who am I?’, know thy Self and be free.
Serve, love, give, purify, meditate, realize,
Be good, do good, be kind, be compassionate.”

That is Divine Life in a nutshell for you. Herein we have a remedy, a wonderful panacea, a cure-all for this worldly bondage, for death and re-birth. But then, when you take medicine, you also have to keep some rules regarding your diet. And here is the diet—the “Song of Eighteen Ities”:-

Serenity, regularity, absence of vanity,
Sincerity, simplicity, veracity,
Equanimity, fixity, non-irritability,
Adaptability, humility, tenacity,
Integrity, nobility, magnanimity,
Charity, generosity, purity.
Practise daily these Eighteen Ities,
You will soon attain immortality.
Brahman is the only real entity,
Mr. So-and-so is a false non-entity.
You will abide in infinity and eternity,
You will behold unity in diversity;
You cannot attain this in the university,
(You can attain this in the Forest Academy).

Practise these divine virtues. They will support you living of the Divine Life. They will support your interior spiritual life. For, without virtues, your life is dry; without virtues, your life is useless and cannot provide a proper field for the play of your divine nature. It is by conquering determinedly (and with full faith in God and in His power to help you) all the negative aspects of your life and making your whole personality a field for the play of all virtues that you afford full scope for the divine light to manifest in you and then to radiate through you. Live such a divine life. Make yourself an embodiment of these divine virtues. Completely conquer your lower nature and thus make yourself a perfect channel and instrument for the outflow and the radiance of the Divinity centred within you. Such is Divine Life.

May divinity infill you. May Divinity inspire you and guide all your actions. May your entire life be a wonderful and a radiant example of divine living. This is my request to you all. This is my earnest urge to you all. Live divinely, my beloved friends, live divinely. Live as you truly are, not as you have deluded yourself into thinking, by forgetfulness of your divine nature. Assert your divine nature and become wonderful flowers, beautiful flowers radiating divine beauty and divine fragrance, spiritual fragrance, in the garden of the Supreme.

May God bless you. May the Indweller inspire you. May Master Sivananda shower his blessings upon you. May all the sages of East and West, of the past as well as the present, ever back you up with their spiritual blessings and lead you on to the ultimate glorious goal of Realization — radiant realization of your glorious divine nature.

I once again thank you for having given me this wonderful opportunity of being amidst you and thus offering my worship through these few words to the God who is invisibly present amidst you, and to each one of you, my beloved fellow seekers. Ever be united. Ever be together — think together, seek together, work together and act together. Feel as one, and through such unity and fellowship, may untold blessings come for all those who come into your contact.

May you all become a great centre of divinity, a great centre of spiritual awakening to countless people, and may you become a great centre of concord, harmony, unity, and a great example of oneness and brotherhood, and may you spread the joy of divine living throughout the whole world in the years that stretch before you.

4. DIVINE LIFE (SWAMI CHIDANANDA)

We have been trying to know about Gurudev's life and his teachings, what he taught us. One of the very, very important, most significant insight that Holy Master Swami Sivanandaji brought into our life and into our understanding is the truth that the spiritual striving, the Yoga-Sadhana cannot be diverted from daily living. You cannot treat them as two things apart having no interconnection. They cannot be treated as watertight compartments. It is impossible that what is going on here has no relevance there. Because, whatever striving you make, whatever Yoga, whatever prayer, whatever meditation or worship you make is within the framework of your life you are living. You are engaged in your spiritual Sadhana within the framework of that life itself, it is the scope of your Sadhana. Your daily life is the receptacle or the ground on which your Sadhana is to rest. So these two are inextricably and inseparably bound up together and are closely interconnected; whatever you are doing in living your daily life has necessarily its effect on your inner life, on your Sadhana life. Also, whatever Sadhana you are doing in the inwardness of your own spiritual subjectivity has its impact on your daily living. If the inner spiritual life you are living within the spiritual interior of your own subjectivity, does not have a corresponding effect on your outer, normal, day-to-day living, then you better sit up, and take a second look at yourself. There is something fundamentally wrong. Something has been wrong somewhere. The Guru will not be able to tell you what. God may try to make you aware of it in direct and indirect ways, but he does not come and correct you. Therefore, it is upto you to take a look at yourself, with very great seriousness, earnestness, sincerity, impartiality and total honesty, and find out what is wrong. If I am entering into that vast silence, that vast Peace in my meditation why do I not have the same peace when I come out of meditation and relate myself to the life around me? What has gone wrong? Why do I not project that Peace outside? I am talking about only one quality of the great Reality. It implies various

qualities, fundamental among them are Purity, Truth, Compassion, Sat-Chit-Ananda, Joy, Cheerfulness and Auspiciousness. That is an expanded blessed state of the mind when you are content to be alone, you do not require anything to be added onto you, you are full. When you are alone, company of your own self is more than enough for yourself. You have no desire, no inclination to come out of yourself and to get into some company or relationship. Our scriptures call it Swatmarama Avastha or the state of abiding and rejoicing in the Self. This is your permanent ground. This is your continuous, unbroken normal state. Let this grow and you will overcome all your problems.

You cannot burn an incense stick and yet not have the room filled with its fragrance. If no fragrance is there, there must be something wrong with the incense stick. It is not a genuine one. Right from the ancient times down to the medieval age, the spiritual ministers; the great devotees and the mystics have given their Experiences and teachings in songs. In this great land, there have been innumerable such devotees and mystics. All of them have reiterated the same truth and spiritual values. If you have a genuine, authentic spiritual life, if you are a real Sadhaka, a devotee of the Lord, your interior life must have its inevitable influence and impact on every thought, word and action in the living of your day-by-day life. And that is the test for you. If there is a dichotomy between your outer life and inner life something is wrong. Find out its reason. Reflect upon it: "If my interior life is genuine and honest, authentic and real, then why is the link, the relationship not there? I am really a wonderful child of God. I am with God inside. But the moment I come in contact with God's other children, I become something else, something different. So either there is something wrong with my interior spirituality or: with my external normal dealings with God's world and God's creatures. Why the two behaviours are not connected ? Why there is a sort of a break?"

Holy Master Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji regarded the living of your daily life as important, if not more important than the practice

of your spiritual Sadhana. He gave, not without any reason, a very significantly true message of 'Divine Life'. His institution is **The Divine Life Society**, its magazine is **The Divine Life** and he gave the name **Divine Life** to his message. He did not call it this Yoga or that Yoga or transcendental meditation or any other name. This name that he gave has very much relevance, very much connection and relationship with your life. Gurudev regarded the living of your life equally important as the practice of your spiritual Sadhana, your Yoga, Vedanta and meditation. Perhaps he regarded the former more important than your spiritual life. Because if your life, your daily living is proper, then alone your Sadhana will proceed unhampered and be progressive and it will yield fruits, and it will go on yielding fruits. You don't have to wait till it culminates in spiritual Realisation. It would go on yielding fruits right now. It would go on giving flowers and yielding fruits step by step. So Gurudev called it Divine Life. If your life is lived rightly, your Sadhana will be fruitful, progressive and effective. If your life is not lived rightly, the fruit or result will not be commensurate with your effort — much effort but little fruit. How can you afford to do that? How much time you have in your life span to go on doing such effort? No one knows. We are here now, but what moment we will not be here God only knows. Therefore we cannot afford to make a lot of effort in spiritual Sadhana without getting the desired results. Your Sadhana must yield fruits. So Gurudev rightly laid great emphasis on our day-to-day life.

Gurudev was very fond of giving analogies in support of intricate truths. He enjoyed it greatly, one such analogy is :

There were some merry-makers who had consumed more liquor than that was good for them. So they were high. They went out for a rowing trip to some place a little away further down the river. They went out on a hot summer night, expecting to reach the destination at the dawn. With all the preparations they came to the river side and boarded a boat. They went on rowing, singing cheerfully in expectation of reaching the great destination. When it was twilight, they were in great spirit thinking that they would soon

be reaching the destination. Then they saw some persons coming towards the river for taking the bath, they started shouting: "We have reached, we have reached." But someone said, "All these people look familiar."

They asked someone, "Which is this place?" 'The villager rebuked, "Don't you recognise your own village ?" A merry-maker argued, "We are rowing for such a long time and how is it that we have not reached our destination ? How can we be stationary at the same place ?" So the wise man explained, "Your boat is tied to a tug in the post. You cannot make any progress unless you untie your boat."

In the same way, the spiritual Sadhana will not bring you nearer to the destination, if you do not, first of all untie the bonds of impurities of Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Moha, Mada, Matsarya, desires, jealousy, hatred, anger, hostility, greed, delusion, untruthfulness, dishonesty. Our efforts will be like the oil-man's bullocks moving on and on from dawn to dust and yet remain at the same place without making any progress whatsoever. If we do not untie ourselves, make us free from all the impurities before launching into spiritual Sadhana either we are trying to deceive ourselves or the people, or we are very, very unwise, thoughtless, foolish. The great scriptures say, the essence of spiritual life is gradually becoming like That whom you adore, whom you are trying to Realise, whom you are meditating upon. A meditator must gradually become transformed into the object which he is meditating upon. If the object is the ultimate Reality that is All-good, All-noble, All-perfect, Absolutely Pure, Bliss Absolute, the Sadhaka must also become Good, Noble, Perfect, Pure, Holy, Godly. Vedanta declares ब्रह्मातिद् ब्रह्मैव भवति "The knower of the Brahman becomes Brahman Itself" (Mundakopanishad 3/2/9). If you really want to worship God, you must become God-like, you must become a god. Then only you can connect yourself with Him and worship Him. The essence of worship is connecting yourself with the Divine Reality and moving towards It, approaching It and entering into It. Ultimately all Sadhana

is connecting yourself with the Reality, approaching It and entering into It. If you want to connect yourself with the supreme Reality, there must be something in you similar to That. Then alone there can be a point of contact, and you can have relationship with God. To worship It, we must already have within us, at least to some degree, the nature of the supreme Reality. 'It is no use quoting Vedanta saying, 'I am an Amsha, a part of God, I am already divine, why should I have anything to do?' This is no good. This is at best, a second-hand knowledge from the scriptures or lectures. This was perhaps the main reason why Gurudev called his gospel 'Divine Life' and did not call it this type of meditation or that type of Vedanta or this type of Yoga or that type of Sadhana, or Kriya Yoga or super-Sadhana. There are so many schools, so many teachers who give specific types of meditation or Sadhana or Yoga and all that. India is full of them. But then, no one seems to realise the importance of emphasising upon life, emphasising upon living the life in a noble, pure, godly, sublime way. This is more than half of all spirituality, all Sadhana. Once you become well-established in a good and noble life, in a pure and holy life, in a life full of kindness, compassion, sympathy, understanding, forbearance, forgiveness pardon, then that life itself has already taken you on the spiritual path. It is like a perfectly prepared field prepared by a farmer for sowing after removing stones and woods, cleaning, ploughing, manuring. If he sows seeds in such a ready field within no time the sprouts appear and he yields a good harvest. If the ground is not prepared, you all know the biblical analogy of the sower of the seeds³¹.

Therefore, Gurudev gave equal emphasis on life as he gave on Sadhana. Sadhana will be in vain unless supported by a spiritual life, Yogic life, holy life.

Gurudev's emphasis on holy and spiritual life is very well depicted in Narsi Mehta's poem. The gist of the Gujarati poem is:

O Lord! Even if I keep religious observances,
Even if I take food only once a day,

Yet if anger, jealousy, revenge do not vanish from my mind
 Then all these are in vain, in vain.
 Even if I visit the temple daily,
 And adore the deity with flowers and incense
 Yet selfishness, greed, attachment, egoism, arrogance vanish not
 Then my worship is a mere self-deceit.
 Even if I mutter prayers and do Japa all the time,
 Attend Satsanga regularly and meditate for hours,
 If love, compassion, kindness and joy do not become my nature
 Then my spiritualism is not true.
 Even If I stay in seclusion and observe Mauna,
 Practise austerity, Tapas and proclaim non-attachment, renunciation,
 Yet if my desires and Vrittis are not annihilated,
 And I have not transcended the body-consciousness
 And know not the Supreme Soul that dwells in all the beings,
 Then all is futile, all is futile.

31 A sower went forth to sow; and when sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up, some fell on stony places, where they had no much earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up and choked them: But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold. But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. (The householder) said, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them. (The New Testament.-St. Matthew XIII).

THE VISION OF DIVINE LIFE

(SWAMI CHIDANANDA)

When devotees and visitors come here and seek the blessings of this servant, he is made to laugh, for unless God had showered divine grace upon them, unless Gurudev had richly blessed them, it would be impossible for them to journey to this part of sacred Uttarakhand — on the banks of the Ganga, amidst the Himalayan foothills — a visit which millions of people in all nooks and corners of India are yearning to achieve even once in their lifetime. If they come to Northern India, take a bath in the holy Ganga, then it is a dream come true; they feel themselves to be richly blessed, they have not lived in vain.

Therefore, I say to them: "You have all that is needed. It is now for you to utilise it, put it to your highest use. Grace you have in plenty, divinely showered by God. Blessings you have in abundance, freely extended to you by Gurudev. Now it is up to you to recognise it, and not only be wise but actively wise in applying the grace and blessings that are already part of your life."

Now, the greatest blessing that has come forth from this source that is Gurudev is the vision of divine life, is his great shining ideal of a life divinely lived, filled with a divine quality. It is the sound practical teachings of divine living — a vision, an ideal and a practical teaching. That is indeed the greatest gift, the greatest blessing.

Let compassion fill your heart. Let truthfulness rule your life and actions. Let the highest purity mark your entire being. May what you are and what you do — your being and doing-be filled with the sublime quality of purity. Adhere to truth, live in truth, act in truth, and abide in truth. Let your heart always be filled with compassion towards even the least of God's creatures—the ants, the flies and the insects, even towards the grass under your feet.

Let *dharma* be your supreme ornament. Let the light of dharma effulgently shine forth from your entire life, from all your thoughts, words and actions. To live for this ideal, to ever keep

striving for this ideal, even to die for this ideal — what greater privilege and honour would one ever want in this squalid life of bickering, selfishness, envy, jealousy, greed, hatred, anger, vengefulness and pettiness? What greater privilege would one ask for than to reflect God in and through their being and doing, that through their life and the living of their life, the world may behold God?

This is indeed the greatest privilege, the highest good fortune, the supreme honour. To shed selfishness and fill your minutes, hours, days, weeks, months and years with unselfishness, to fill your heart with devotion and ever be in a state of loving, devoted communion with the Supreme Reality, to be a living and moving centre of love for the Divine, what greater task could one wish for?

To be ever engaged in working upon ourselves, perfecting ourselves, subduing the senses, calming down the restless mind day after day, sitting during the serene silent hours of dawn and eventide, taking the mind inward, gathering its rays, focusing it upon the Reality and dwelling in that state of inner calmness, an inner abidance with the Divine — contemplation, meditation; to ever discriminate between the Real and the unreal, the Reality and appearance, to keenly enquire into the real nature of things, and ever be moving from being bound to a physical consciousness towards a gradual identification with the invisible, the subtle, the undying, the Real; to be ever engaged in these processes of personal spiritual upliftment, what more task would one wish to occupy oneself with?

What is there in this petty world outside? Look at the newspapers and look at the magazines and contrast life there to the way to blessedness vouchsafed to each one of you sitting here in the presence of Gurudev in his sacred Samadhi Hall, listening to these words prompted by him. Reflect for awhile on the world outside and the doings and goings on there and compare it to where you are — its life, its atmosphere, its environment.

Sublime is this environment. Holy and sacred is this atmosphere, permeated with spirituality. It is like Satya Yuga in the

midst of Kali Yuga — heaven on earth. There should be a perception of the beauty, sanctity, auspiciousness and blessedness of what has been attained. It should be appreciated and fully taken advantage of. The within should not vitiate or nullify the without.

Every day you chant: "*Namostv anantaya sahasramurtaye sahasra- padakshi-siroru-bahave; sahasra-namne purushaya sasvate sahasra-koti-yuga- dharine namah* (Salutation to the Infinite Lord of a thousand forms; who has a thousand feet, eyes, heads and hands. Salutations to that eternal Being who is called by a thousand names and who wields thousands of crores of time cycles)." "*Tatsarvam, vyapya narayanah sthitah* (Whatever there is in this world both within and without is pervaded by the Supreme Being)."

Would you allow anything within you to contradict and hide this grand fact, this glorious truth of the entire universe around you? Will you become the cataract blinding your own vision? Will you become your own greatest stumbling block, or will you become your own greatest friend, greatest helper and redeemer, responding to the call "*uddharet atmanatmanam* (Let a man raise himself by his own self)? Will you cooperate with God? Will you do everything, with every nerve fibre of your being, to take the maximum benefit from this grand truth that is revealed to us for our day-to-day living?

Great indeed would be our error if we allow our psyche to come in between ourselves and God. *Mano eve manushyanam karanam bandhamokshayoh* (Mind alone is the cause of bondage and liberation of human beings). Whatever there is is from within. The help is from within; the obstacle is from within. The friend is from within; the enemy is from within. Bondage is from within; liberation is from within.

All other things — rituals, the ringing of bells, reading of scriptures, chanting of names, singing, dancing — are only to correct and transform the inside, so that from within you may come light, awakening, awareness, purity, right resolution and the overcoming

of obstacles. They are meant to grant you the insights which give you the tools for working out this entire process of liberation from within your own being. That is their only meaning, significance and relevance.

Radiant Atman, all of you who are aspiring for something higher! Know this for sure-whatever you are, whatever you will be tomorrow and ultimately, will be decided by neither God nor devil, but by your interior, your own being. Therein is both the Pandavas as well as the Kauravas. Therein is Rama as well as Ravana. Therein is the radiant, effulgent sunlight, the sunrise of jnana surya, as well as the dense darkness of non-perception. All the help that we receive is for this purpose, that we may make the right choice, that we may turn in the right direction, and keep going in the right direction.

Gurudev has granted to us the vision of divine life, the ideal of divine life. He has granted us the practical spiritual teachings for this great adventure, this great privilege of divinising our life, of purposefully leading a divine life, with the ingredients of selflessness and service, devotion and worship, discipline and meditation, with ceaseless enquiry, discrimination, investigation and illumination, with the ingredients of lofty character and conduct and a strict, unswerving abidance to truth.

Dynamically engage yourself in this great gift that has been placed before you by beloved and worshipful Gurudev, who came upon earth in order to give this supreme direction to man's life. Blessed are we who have been able to live so close in proximity and time to his divine personality.

May God speed you towards that shining goal! May God shower grace, and grant you success in that great attainment! Strive on towards the Goal Supreme and crown yourself with blessedness — not in the distant future, but right from this moment onward!"

LESSON - 17

COMPANY OF SAINTS (SATSAANGA)
AND
STUDY OF HOLY SCRIPTURES
(SVADHYAYA)

**SATSANGA
(COMPANY OF SAINTS)
(SWAMI SIVANANDA)**

1. THE MEANING OF SATSANGA

The word ‘Satsanga’ is the combination of the two words ‘Sat’ and ‘Sanga.’ ‘Sat’ means existence absolute, which is Brahman. ‘Sat’ is the essential nature of Brahman which is permanent in things that change, which is the only reality that upholds the world of appearance.

The same ‘Sat,’ with the accidental attributes of omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence is called Isvara or Paramatman. In brief, ‘Sat’ refers to Isvara as well as Brahman, both ultimately being the one and the same reality.

‘Sanga’ literally means company or union. To be always in the company of the Lord, or to be established in Brahman, is the literal meaning of the word ‘Satsanga.’ But, as long as ignorance or Avidya remains, the direct realisation of Brahman is impossible. When ignorance is destroyed by wisdom, the real nature reveals itself. This is the highest Satsanga.

The next possibility is to please God so much by our unflinching devotion that He has to sport with us assuming a gentle form according to our desire, even as He did in the case of the Gopis. But the means to the realisation of this blessed end is also called Satsanga or the company of the wise. The means being essentially not different from the end, is also named after the end. Because the company of the wise leads to the realisation of Brahman (with attributes or without attributes), it is also termed as Satsanga. In this sense, Satsanga means the company of the Satpurushas. Satpurushas are those who have realised truth as well as those who are aspirants after truth. Those people who have renounced egoism, greed, lust, etc., are Satpurushas. Those people who have attained equal vision, balanced mind, unflinching devotion to the Lord, are Satpurushas. Those people who are endowed with

peace, bliss, contentment, simplicity, fearlessness, humility, powerful voice, a face beaming with the glow of saintliness, etc., are Satpurushas.

GRACE OF GOD ALONE MAKES SATSA NG A POSSIBLE

It is very, very difficult to come into contact with a Satpurusha or a saint. It is more so to recognise a saint. A man of worldly Samskaras wants to weigh the saintliness of a sage by his own conceptional balance, and finding him lacking in weight, discards him as a false saint and thereby he does not get the instantaneous benefit arising out of the contact of the sage. But, even then, the company of the saint exerts an inexorable influence on the person concerned, which he realises sooner or later. Bhagavan Narada says in his Bhakti Sutras: “The company of the great is very difficult, inaccessible, but infallible.”

Companionship of the great ones is difficult of attainment. It is hardly possible to assign how and when men may be taken into the society of the great. But, once obtained, association with the great ones is infallible in its operation. Love of God is obtained principally and undoubtedly by the grace of the great ones, or in other words, from the touch of divine compassion. Companionship of the great ones is gained by the grace of God alone, because there is no distinction between Him and His men.

There is no difference between God and a realised Bhagavata. Both are identical. A sage is God Himself. The Upanishad declares: “He who knows Brahman becomes Brahman.” The glow of a sage is infinite and eternal as that of Brahman.

LIGHT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND HIS DEVOTEE

Lord Krishna declares in the Gita: “The same am I to all beings: to Me there is none hateful or dear; but those who worship Me with devotion are in Me and I am also in them.” Though the

rays of the sun fall equally on one and all, it is the faces of the diamonds that dazzle more than anything else. Though a man may possess hundreds of rooms in his house, he delights only in his drawing room which is well decorated. Even so, though God is equally for one and all, He manifests more vividly in the heart of a sage, which is made transparent by purity, which is decorated by the rare jewels of compassion, mercy, self-control, equal vision and wisdom.

The relationship between God and His devotee has been described in three ways. Firstly, both are non-different, because a saint has no separate existence apart from the Lord. The will of the Lord is the will of the sage. The reflection of the sun has merged in the real sun. The salt-doll has become one with the ocean. The dew-drop has slipped into the shining sea. The Jiva has merged in the Lord. When the egoism has vanished, there is no difference between the Lord and the sage.

From another standpoint, the Lord is considered to be greater than a saint, because a saint is but the way. One is not satisfied with the Darshan of a sage; he asks, "O Maharaj! Please show me the way to God-realisation. How am I to conduct myself for the attainment of the highest Purushartha or liberation?" This proves that the Lord is greater than the saint. But this is a relative standpoint. A person still in bondage may come into contact with a sage, but it is very difficult for him to realise the consciousness of the sage which is non-different from the Lord. As long as he does not realise this, a sage appears to be merely a way to a certain goal. But, in reality, he is the way as well as the goal.

And as far as the sage is both the way and the goal, he is even considered greater than the Lord Himself. Saint Tulasidasji says, "I have firm belief that a devotee of Rama is greater than Him." All the saints declare thus unanimously.

Though the Lord is everywhere, without the grace of a Guru, He is not to be realised. The saint or Guru alone is the way. There is absolutely no other way leading to escape from Samsara.

Saints are the living manifestations of the Lord. Seeing a

sage, meditating on him, remembering him, touching his feet, talking with him, etc., bring about a sudden inflow of God's grace into the individual, by which the latter quickly attains the lofty peak of spiritual knowledge.

Tulasidasji sings the glory of Satsanga in glowing terms: "O dear one! Should you keep the happiness of heaven and of all the higher worlds in one pan of the balance and the happiness that arises out of Satsanga in the other, the latter will outweigh the former."

There is no boat other than Satsanga to take you across the ocean of Samsara. Blessed is he who has come into contact with a Satpurusha, a realised sage. More blessed is he who has cultivated unflinching devotion to his feet. And the most blessed is he who has attained communion with the consciousness of the sage.

In case contact with a sage is not possible, one should try to be in contact with sublime books like the Upanishads, the Gita, the Yoga-Vasishtha, the Ramayana, the Bhagavata, etc. He should try to take resort to holy places and there engage himself in discoursing upon, or hearing of, the glory of God. This also is Satsanga for him. Whatever helps one towards the attainment of purity of heart should be considered as Satsanga.

2. THE POWER OF SATSANGA (SWAMI SIVANANDA)

The glory and power of Satsanga, association with the wise, saints, Yogis, Sannyasins and Mahatmas is indescribable. Even a moment's company is quite sufficient to overhaul the old vicious Samskaras of the worldly people. The magnetic aura, the spiritual vibration, and the powerful currents of developed adepts produce a tremendous influence on the minds of worldlings. Service of Mahatmas purifies the minds of passionate men very rapidly. Satsanga elevates the mind to magnanimous heights. Just as a single matchstick burns huge bundles of cotton in a few seconds, so also, the company of saints burns all thoughts and Samskaras of passion within a short time. The only potent specific for inducing burning

Vairagya and burning desire for liberation is Satsanga and Satsanga alone. That is the reason why Bhagavan Sankaracharya has spoken very highly about the power of Satsanga in his books. If you cannot get good Satsanga in your own place, you can visit places like Varanasi, Nasik, Prayag and Rishikesh, whenever you get holidays. Study of books written by realised persons will also tantamount to Satsanga. Rogues Jagai and Madhai, dacoit Ratnakara, were all transformed into saints by Satsanga. Satsanga is a fire to destroy passion. There is no doubt of this. The only potent specific for inducing burning Vairagya and burning desire for Liberation is Satsanga and Satsanga alone.

The association with the holy sages is quite enough to instil in a soul wisdom and love. Vidya originates in those whose faults have been washed away by the mighty force of Satsanga which has independent power of destroying all faults and originating Vidya.

Those who hear the life-giving words of good men have their heart that are tainted with evil, purified. They ultimately reach the lotus feet of the Lord. This shows that the words of good men have the power of purifying the soul and carrying it to the feet of the Master.

BENEFIT OF SATSANGA

Let me repeat here the words of Sri Krishna to Uddhava: "I am not attracted so much by the practices of Yoga, by the study of Sankhya, by the recitation of the Vedas, by the performance of penances, by renunciation, by acts of sacrifices, charity and public utility, by alms, by fasts, worship of Devas and recitation of sacred Mantras, by visiting sacred places of pilgrimage, and by the rules of restraint and religious observances, as by the company of the good." Here, the Lord, even after revealing His own mystery to Uddhava, concludes by saying that the company of the good (Satsanga) is the highest means of approaching God. Therefore, Satsanga is one of the secrets of Sadhana or practice by which an aspirant may reach God.

HOW SATSANGA GRADUALLY LEADS TO THE VISION OF GOD

First comes keeping company of the righteous and good men and serving them. By such company and service, there dawns the knowledge of the essential nature of one's own self and of the divine or supreme Self. Then comes Vairagya or a total disgust for everything of this world and of the next, with a yearning for the Lord. This is Bhakti. When Bhakti becomes strong, the man becomes the beloved of the Lord, and because of such dearness to Him, he is chosen by Him. Then comes the direct vision of the Lord.

Vivekananda attended the Satsanga of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. Jnanadeva had the Satsanga of Nivrittinath. Gorakhnath attended Satsanga of Matsyendranath. The practice of feeling His presence in everything, of seeing God in every face and in every object is, in itself, a grand sublime Satsanga. Hail, hail to Mahatmas who hold Satsanga and to sincere devotees who attend them! Very often, devotion is kindled by association and talk with devotees. As flame is enkindled by flame, so heart catches fire from heart. Says Sri Krishna: "The wise adore Me in rapt devotion. With their minds wholly in Me, with their life absorbed in Me, enlightening each other, ever conversing about Me, they are satisfied and delighted."

In the East, students are always advised to seek the company of holy men and listen to their conversation, thus fanning into flame a little spark of love and earnestness. Only a strong soul can keep itself glowing in isolation, and the beginner will do well to take the opportunity that comes in his way to strengthen his own aspirations by communion with others who share them.

INDISPENSABILITY OF SATSANGA FOR THOSE WHO CANNOT THINK FOR THEMSELVES

There are very few people in this world who can correctly think for themselves, who can do Sadvichara and depend on their

own intelligence in their pursuit of Truth. These few people are, of course, their own Gurus or teachers, and do not require any other teacher. Their Satsanga consists in their meditation on the Highest Intelligence or Consciousness.

Those who cannot think correctly and cannot depend on their own thoughts, feelings and volitions, who are swayed by passions and delusions, constitute the majority of mankind. Such people require a wise and good Guru or teacher in order that they may be enabled to lead a well-directed life. Their Satsanga consists in the company and service of, receiving direct instructions from, and observing and emulating the conduct of their Guru or teacher who is wise and good.

It is only the sincere and earnest Sadhaka who knows the real value of Satsanga or association with saints and sages. Real Satsanga gives the aspirant inner spiritual strength to face the struggles of life, overcome temptations, kill inner cravings, fill the mind with positive divine thoughts.

The company of a saint or a sage can transform evil into good. Faith in God, in scriptures, attachment and devotion to God, slowly develop in those who do regular Satsanga. Even a sinner has a hope through the Sanga of a Mahatma or Mahapurusha. Rogues Jagai and Madhai, dacoit Ratnakara, were all transformed into saints by Satsanga.

Satsanga is the greatest of all the purifiers and illuminators of man. Satsanga is the one panacea for all the ills of life. There is nothing so inspiring, elevating and solacing as Satsanga. Satsanga is the sap of life, the elixir of thought, the joy of the soul. There is no other way to the attainment of supreme blessedness than Satsanga. There is nothing so great, so important, so indispensable, so delightful, as Satsanga. This is the only way and there is no other.

A WORD TO MODERN EDUCATED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

The minds of the modern educated ladies and gentlemen are filled with materialistic poison. There is not an iota of spirituality in their hearts. They have no idea of the potency and efficacy of Satsanga. They have wrong Samskaras. Their brains and minds need thorough overhauling and flushing, if they really wish to have eternal bliss and everlasting peace. They should resort to constant Satsanga. Then, gradually, they will realise the incalculable benefits of Satsanga. Life is short. Time is fleeting. Death is waiting to devour you all at any moment. That ‘tomorrow’ will never come. It is very difficult to get again this human birth. Utilise it profitably in the realisation of your Self through Satsanga. Realise Satchidananda Atman through Satsanga. Then alone you can be free. Self-realisation is the goal of human life. This is your highest duty or Dharma.

3. THE HINDU SCRIPTURES ON THE GLORY OF SATSANGA (SWAMI SIVANANDA) The Yoga-vasishtha

Sage Vasishtha says to Sri Rama:

“Satsanga serves as a boat to cross this terrible ocean of Samsara. The company of sages even for a moment is highly beneficial. Even the Darshan of Mahatmas destroys sins and elevates the mind. The company of virtuous people produces the fresh blossom of discrimination. The company of sages wards off all disasters and destroys the tree of ignorance. Sages prescribe the best rules of conduct for aspirants and teach them the correct mode of life. The company of the virtuous sheds light on the right path and destroys the internal darkness of man. The company of sages is the unfailing means to conquer Maya and this dire mind.

“Contentment, Satsanga, enquiry and Santi are the fourfold means of attaining Self-realisation. Those who are in possession of these fourfold means have crossed the ocean of Samsara. ‘Contentment’ is regarded as the best gain, ‘good company’ as the right cause, ‘enquiry’ as the true knowledge, and ‘Santi’ as the

highest bliss of man. All prosperity and success attend on him who is possessed of these fourfold means. As soon as one of these virtues is developed, it will serve to weaken the force of the faults of your uncontrollable mind. The cultivation of virtues leads to the suppression and eradication of vices; but the fostering of vice will, on the contrary, conduce to the increase of vices and suppression of virtuous qualities. The mind is a wilderness of errors in which the stream of our desires is running with a tremendous force amidst its two banks of good and evil.

“Therefore, O Rama, control your mind bravely and develop diligently the above fourfold means for your conduct in life.

“He who practises regularly Atmic enquiry will never be afflicted by the pains and miseries of Samsara. He will have always equanimity of mind and equal vision. He will be ever peaceful and joyful. Maya will never approach him. He will ever engage himself in meditation on the Imperishable and Self-luminous Atman.

“One should study books on Atma-jnana, keep company with the sages, develop the fourfold means and right conduct, control the senses, and ever engage himself in the practice of Atmic enquiry till Knowledge of the Self dawns in him.”

Srimad Bhagavata

Lord Krishna says to Uddhava:

“I am not so easily attainable by Yoga, Sankhya or discrimination, Dharma, study of the Vedas, Tapas, renunciation, liberal gifts, charitable acts, rites such as Aghnihotra, fasts, vows, Yajnas, secret Mantras, resort to pilgrimages, Yamas and Niyamas, as by Satsanga which puts an end to all attachments.

“It is only by association with the wise and the righteous, that many who were of a Rajasic or Tamasic nature — such as Vritra, son of the sage Tvashtri, Prahlada, the Daityas, the Asuras and the Rakshasas, Gandharvas, Apsaras, Nagas, Siddhas, Charanas, Guhyakas and Vidyadharas, many beasts and birds, and among mankind Vaisyas, Sudras, women and outcastes who are of

the lowest birth, have attained Me.

“Vaishaparva, Bali, Bana, Maya, Vibhishana, Sugriva, Hanuman, Jambavan the bear, Gajendra the elephant, Jatayu the vulture, Tuladhara the merchant, Dharmavyadha the fowler, Kubja the hunchbacked perfume-seller, the Gopis in Vraja, the wives of the Brahmanas engaged in sacrifices in Brindavan, and others — all these did not study the Vedas, did not sit at the feet of great men of learning for the sake of knowledge; they did not observe any vows or fasts; they did not perform Tapas; but they attained Me through the association with saints and Sadhus.

“Through love alone, developed through the company of saints, the Gopis, and even the cows, trees, beasts, serpents, and others of dull-witted nature, became perfected and easily attained Me whom one does not attain by making great endeavours through Yoga or Sankhya, charity, vows, Tapas, sacrifices, teaching and study of the Vedas, or renunciation. When I was taken by Akrura to Mathura with Balarama, the Gopis, with their hearts given to Me through intense devotion, were greatly afflicted at heart on account of My separation. Nothing but Me could give them any delight or interest. For the Gopis, those very nights which they spent like a moment with Me, their most beloved one, while at Brindavan, became in my absence, like Yugas. With their hearts and minds fixed on Me, through intense love and attachment, they were not conscious of their bodies or their relatives or what was near or at a distance, just as sages do not know names and forms in the state of Samadhi or superconscious condition, like the rivers merged in the waters of the ocean.

“The ignorant Gopis, who were not aware of My real nature as Supreme Brahman, took Me as their beloved paramour and yet they attained Me, the Supreme Brahman, by hundreds and thousands, through the power of Satsanga or holy association. Therefore, O Uddhava, abandon injunctions and prohibitions, the course of Pravritti Karma and Nivritti Karma, what is yet to be studied or what is already studied; rise above the rules and counter-rules. Care not for Srutis or Smritis, for biddings and forbiddings; take refuge in Me alone wholeheartedly and with all devotion —

the Atman of all beings. Thou shalt have no fear from any quarter, from any cause or causes.”

NARADA BHAKTI SUTRAS

“Love of God is obtained principally and undoubtedly by the grace of the great ones, or in other words, from the touch of divine compassion”. (*Narada Bhakti Sutras*:38)

“Companionship of the great ones is again difficult of attainment. It is hardly possible to assign how and when men may be taken into the society of the great. But once obtained, association with the great ones is infallible in its operation”.

(*Narada Bhakti Sutras*:39)

“Companionship of the great ones is gained by the grace of God alone. (*Narada Bhakti Sutras* : 40) This is because there is no distinction between Him and His men.”

4. HOUSEHOLDERS AND SATSANGA

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

This world appears to be very beautiful, charming and attractive. Delicious drinks, luscious fruits, fragrant flowers, sweets and toffees, tea and coffee, beautiful women and magnificent gardens,—and the mind is attracted to them. The man who has no discrimination and dispassion is attracted. He lives in Maya, thinks always of Maya, dwells constantly upon sensual objects, and is filled with Asubha Vasanas. He leads an Asuric life in this world.

But, reflect for a moment on the true nature of this world. With all these beautiful things, there is a constant undercurrent of Janma, Mrityu, Jara and Vyadhi — birth, death, old age and disease. Loss of property, death of near relatives and dear friends, dishonour and defeat, these are the things that you experience daily, even though you run after the beautiful objects thinking they will give you unalloyed happiness. You are immersed in sorrow. You are sorely disappointed. You have misunderstood the nature of the world. This is a world of pain, sorrow and death. You cannot get real peace, happiness or bliss in this world, from these sense-objects. Where can you get them?

Realise Your Real Nature Through Sadhana and Satsanga and Attain Immortal Bliss

Behind these names and forms, behind these fleeting sense-objects, behind these perishable phenomena, there is the Satchidananda Para Brahman, full of bliss, full of eternal peace and wisdom, illumination and enlightenment. Attain this Atman through study of sacred scriptures, meditation, Japa, Kirtan and Satsanga. You will be freed from the trammels of the flesh, from slavery to the mind, from the shackles of transmigration.

Avidya, Kama and Karma bind you to this wheel of birth and death. You have forgotten your real essential nature. You are ignorant of your Satchidananda Svarupa. Therefore you feel that happiness lies in the external objects of the senses. And, desire arises in you for them. Then you exert to obtain them, and Karma results. Karma brings about birth and death.

Therefore, if you want to free yourself from birth and death, free yourself from desires, from attachment, from Asubha Vasanas, and ultimately, from this primordial ignorance, develop discrimination, dispassion, serenity of mind. Practise the Ashtanga Yoga of Patanjali Maharshi, Bhakti Yoga of Devarshi Narada, Jnana Yoga of Sankaracharya, Karma Yoga of Bhagavan Krishna or the Yoga of Synthesis which is most suitable to this modern age. You will be freed from birth and death. You will enjoy eternal bliss. This is the goal. This is your Dharma. You have taken birth here as a human being in order to reach this goal here and now, in this very birth. If you do not strive to reach the goal, you are wasting your life and neglecting this precious gift of human birth.

Satsanga Guards You Against the Unreal Glitter of Worldly Objects

Forget not the goal. In order not to forget the goal, Satsanga is most essential. Satsanga keeps the fire of aspiration alive in your head. It is a shield to protect you from lapsing into lethargy, from gliding back into the old grooves of sense-cravings, from forgetting

your goal. Satsanga is your best friend, your spiritual nourishment. Satsanga is greater than your parents; your parents gave the body, but Satsanga gives you spiritual illumination. Satsanga is one of the fundamental means for attaining God-realisation. Where there is Satsanga, Mahatmas and great saints assemble. They remind you of the Reality; they guard you against the unreal glitter of worldly objects; they save you from the formidable ocean of Samsara. Their glorious example inspires you; their soul-elevating Upadesa is your guide. From Satsanga you get practical lessons in control of mind, concentration and meditation.

Satsanga is, therefore, indispensable for householders who have to engage themselves in their worldly duties, important for spiritual aspirants who are treading the path of renunciation, and highly beneficial even for advanced Yogis and students of Vedanta. It spiritually awakens the householders, inspires the spiritual aspirants, and sustains the spirit of the advanced Yogis. To the great saints and Mahatmas, Satsanga is a pleasure, delight, joy and Loka-sangraha Seva. Mahatmas wish to share their spiritual experiences with struggling souls and rescue those who are caught in the snare of Samsara. They are the soul of Satsanga. The very purpose of convening Satsanga is to enjoy the company of these Holy Ones.

The Real Satsanga Bhavan is in Your Own Heart

The Satsanga Bhavan, the place where Satsanga is held, is Vaikuntha, Kailasa or Param-dham, in reality. The real Satsanga Bhavan is in your own heart. There dwells the Sat, the Supreme Reality, that Existence Absolute or Brahman. Control the mind by the practice of Yama, Niyama, Asana and Pranayama. Make the mind one-pointed by the practice of Pratyahara and Dharana. Then meditate on the Self, the Atman dwelling in your heart. You can enter into your own Satsanga Bhavan daily through self-analysis, introspection, enquiry into the nature of the Self. This will lead to Self-realisation, when you will for ever be one with that Sat, the infinite eternal Existence.

This is your goal. Forget not. Maya is very powerful. With all your good intentions, you will forget this your foremost duty. Therefore, come to the Satsanga Bhavan and associate with saints and Yogis who will instruct you how to control the mind, how to practise Pranayama and Brahma-vichara, how to wean the mind from sensual objects, how to fill the mind with Sattva.

Identification with the body and the mind is the cause for all sufferings. In reality, you are Satchidananda-svarupa; identification with this real Svarupa is the key to perennial peace and supreme bliss. *Ajo Nityah Sasvatoyam Purano*: this Atman is unborn, eternal and ancient. Be regular in your meditation, Japa, Kirtan, prayer. People do Kirtan for some time, attend Satsanga for some time; and then they leave off. This is a sad error. Regularity is of paramount importance in Sadhana. Whatever you do, do regularly. Increase the period of meditation gradually. Do not be attracted by the tantalising tinsels of this world. Nobody has been benefited by material possessions. You may have crores of rupees in the bank, you may have a hundred motor-cars and a dozen bungalows: but, peace of mind you cannot have from these. You can have peace of mind only if you are regular in Japa, meditation, Kirtan and Satsanga. Only when you realise the Self will you enjoy perennial peace. Construct the Satsanga Bhavan in your own heart through regular and systematic spiritual practice and realise Him, not in the unknown future, but right now this very second. Forget not the goal.

Let me remind you of the last word of the Upanishads. *Tat Tvam Asi*: thou art that supreme, infinite, immortal Satchidananda Brahman. Have constant Nama-smaran; even when you are working, mentally repeat *Sri Ram, Sri Ram*. Sri Ram is not only the Avatar of Lord Vishnu, consort of Sita, but He is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent Para Brahman. Constantly meditate on Sri Ram. Be good. Do good. Be noble. Be gentle. Be generous. Attain Self-realisation through Satsanga, Svadhyaya, Japa, Kirtan and meditation. May Lord bless you all!

5. SELECT SAYINGS ON SATSANGA (SWAMI SIVANANDA)

What is Satsanga?

1. To get oneself established in Brahman is real Satsanga. Company of the wise is also Satsanga. Study of religious books written by the realised souls is also Satsanga. Satsanga or association with the wise removes the darkness of the heart, leads you to the right path and causes the sun of wisdom to shine in your heart.

2. Satsanga is association with the wise. Live in the company of sages, saints, Sadhus, Yogis and Sannyasins; hear their valuable Upadesa or instructions and follow them implicitly. This is Satsanga.

God and the Saint

3. God is the great purifier. A saint also is a great purifier.

4. God incarnates as saints and sages when their need is felt most.

5. God works through sages and saints.

6. God reveals Himself in a saint in His full glory, infinite power, wisdom and bliss.

7. The saints are the heart of the Lord and the Lord is the heart of the saint.

8. It is extremely difficult to come in contact with a saint and to be benefited by his company. It is through divine grace only one will get his Darshan and Satsanga.

9. Divine grace works through saints.

The Glory of Saints

10. Saints are the living symbols of religion and are the true benefactors of humanity.

11. The sage or saint or Yogi is a magnet. He is a centre of power and wisdom.

12. A sage is a sustainer of the world. He is a source of perpetual inspiration. He is an instrument through which divine grace is transmitted to the unregenerated men.

13. A sage is the salt which preserves the society from decay and degeneration.

14. A saint is a beacon-light in the stormy sea of this Samsara. He prevents many ship-wrecks in the lives of many human beings.

15. A realised sage or saint is a fountain of delight, joy and illumination. Seek his company and evolve. Serve him with faith and devotion.

16. A sage is a fountain of spiritual wisdom. Approach him with all humility and reverence. He will impart to you divine wisdom.

17. Learn wisdom from saints. They are your saviours. Know them to be saints who possess godly qualities.

The Benefits of Satsanga

18. Satsanga with Mahatmas, Sadhus and the Guru plays a tremendous part in the attainment of quick spiritual progress.

19. Satsanga is the easiest and quickest means to change the minds of worldly persons towards the spiritual path and to thoroughly overhaul the vicious, wrong Samskaras.

20. Satsanga elevates the mind and fills it with Sattva or purity. It eradicates the vicious thoughts in the mind and leads to the attainment of wisdom or Brahma-jnana.

21. Without Satsanga, this mind which is filled with worldly impurities cannot be turned towards God.

22. Satsanga with sages is the surest Viveka-inspiring agent. Vairagya or dispassion cannot be attained without Satsanga.

23. Satsanga removes the darkness of ignorance and fills your mind with Vairagya or non-attachment or dispassion for worldly enjoyments. Satsanga is the sun that dispels the cloud of ignorance. It forces you to lead the life divine and have strong conviction in the existence of God.

24. The company of a saint remarkably hastens the growth of Sattvic virtues in the aspirant, and gives him strength to awaken the dormant powers, and to eradicate undesirable negative qualities and various defects.

25. Satsanga helps a great deal in the attainment of Moksha. There is no other way. It removes and destroys the threefold afflictions. It is an unfailing means to conquer Maya and this dire mind.

26. Satsanga is a formidable and impregnable fortress to protect the young aspirants from the temptations and the attacks of Maya.

27. Just as a boat is the greatest shelter to a drowning man, so also, a saint or a sage is the only shelter to the persons who are being drowned in the ocean of worldliness.

28. Satsanga is a sentinel at the door of Moksha. If you make friendship with him, he will introduce you to his other friends, viz., Vichara (enquiry), Santi (peace) and Santosha (contentment) and you will attain Self-realisation quickly and easily.

29. Satsanga is unfailing in its results.

30. Satsanga or association with the wise is the one panacea for all the ills of life.

31. There is nothing so inspiring, elevating, solacing and delightful as Satsanga.

32. Satsanga is the greatest of all purifiers and illuminators of man.

33. Satsanga with a sage even for a minute is much better than rulership of a kingdom.

34. Have the company of saints who will heal your sores, infuse new life into you, rejuvenate you, and show you the way to peace and happiness.

35. Follow the teachings of saints and sages, the perfected beings, the seers of Truth. Attune yourself with their Spirit.

36. Life, fame, happiness, power and knowledge will increase in that man who respects elders and saints, and with faith and devotion prostrates before them.

How Holy Company Transforms

37. The human mind is a very receptive instrument. If you place it in evil company, it will acquire evil tendencies. If you place it in holy company, it will acquire divine traits.

38. Bright ideals infuse an urge to grow into their likeness. Evil examples also have a similar effect if the mind is not guarded.

39. If you go to a sage, there will automatically come a feeling of purity and peace within you.

40. Just as cold, fear and darkness depart from one who approaches fire, so does weakness, worldliness and ignorance depart from him who keeps himself near to the saints.

41. Saints at once purify those who go near them, whereas Ganga purges the sins of only those whom its water comes in contact with in ablution.

42. Saints cleanse the sinners at once at the very sight of them.

43. The sight of a sage is delightful. To live with him is always peaceful. To converse with him is blissful.

44. The moment the mind thinks of a sage, immediately all evil desires, base passions are brushed aside.

45. At the time of thinking of saintly personages, the mind gets moulded into the shape of the qualities of which it thinks, and thereby becomes pure.

46. Meditation on the lives of saints is equal to holy company. Study of their teachings is equal to holy company.

47. To think of the lives of saints, to live in their company, to have the good fortune of receiving their blessings, is to draw forth upon yourselves a shower of purity, inspiration and divine consciousness.

48. The very company of sages and saints has a tremendous transforming effect on the lives of true seekers. It lifts them up to the heights of sublimity, purity and spirituality. It does not fail to affect even the rank materialists.

49. By association with saints even for a short time, the aspirants acquire strong faith in the Lord.

50. The sage is very silent. He speaks a few words. These words produce a tremendous impression. They give a new life and joy to all who understand him and his message. In his presence alone all the doubts of the aspirants are cleared, though he remains mute.

51. The company of saints generates love for God. The love for God brings salvation.

52. One moment of company with the holy builds a ship to cross this ocean of life.

How to Benefit from the Company of Saints

53. Jivanmuktas or the liberated sages are ever ready to help those who are still climbing to reach the peak of wisdom. This is their work in this world. It is the duty of the aspirants to seek their aid and have a receptive attitude.

54. To benefit from the company of saints, you have to prepare yourself first. Do not go with any preconceived notion or prejudice. Go with an open, receptive mind. Go without expectations. Approach them humbly, respectfully. Assimilate what appeals to you. If some of their teachings do not appeal to you, do not form a hasty opinion. If you do not like them, you need not

take them to heart. What may be suitable to another may not be suitable to you. Yet, with regard to broad fundamentals, there can be no difference of opinion.

55. One should possess the right desire to cross the ocean of Samsara and to attain Knowledge of Brahman through Satsanga.

56. When you go before a sage, do not ask him questions out of mere inquisitiveness. Sit in his presence humbly. Observe him. Listen to him without prejudice. Ask him only such questions about which you really need clarification.

57. Ask him only pertinent questions. Do not draw him into politics or public bickerings.

58. Meditate in the presence of a sage. You will get inner light which will clear your doubts.

59. An intelligent man only will understand and realise the Truth in the company of a sage.

Service of Saints

60. The easy way to reach God is to live in the company of saints and practise their teaching.

61. The words of a sage enliven the heart and clear the doubts of ignorance. Try to profit as much as you can by their instructions.

62. Without the grace of saints, you cannot know the secrets of divine life. You can acquire their grace by sincere practice of their precepts as well as by doing personal service to them.

63. Service to the saints is the door to Moksha.

64. It is very difficult to attain the good fortune of serving the saints.

65. Association with saints comes when the seeker is nearing his salvation.

66. The Lord is enthroned in the heart of a man who has unselfish devotion to saints.

The Lives of Saints

67. Lives of saints are the compass-needles on your voyage to Moksha.

68. A book which treats of the lives of saints is a constant companion and priceless treasure for you.

69. Constant study of the lives of saints will enable you to lead a saintly life. You will imbibe their noble qualities.

70. You will be gradually moulded in the spiritual path. You will draw inspiration from them.

71. There will be an inner urge in you to attempt for God-realisation.

72. Remember the great saints and sages. You will be inspired. They are not dead. They are more alive today than ever before.

73. Beware of bad company; even a sober man begins to drink in the company of a drunkard.

74. Anything that brings impure thoughts in the mind is bad company.

75. Evil company is very dangerous. It leads to the rousing up of passion, anger, hatred, delusion, loss of memory and loss of discrimination. Therefore, shun evil company ruthlessly.

76. The company of men who associate with women is the door leading to worldly bondage.

6. THE DISASTROUS EFFECTS OF EVIL COMPANY (SWAMI SIVANANDA)

The effects of evil company are highly disastrous. The aspirant should shun all sorts of evil company. The mind is filled with bad ideas by contact with evil companions. The little faith in God and scriptures also vanishes. A man is known by the company he keeps. Birds of the same feather flock together.

These are all proverbs or wise maxims. They are quite true. Just as a nursery is to be well-fenced in the beginning for protection against cows, etc., so also, a neophyte should protect himself very carefully from foreign evil influences. Otherwise he is ruined totally. The company of those who speak lies, who commit adultery, theft, cheating, double-dealing, who indulge in idle talks, backbiting and talebearing, who have no faith in God and in the scriptures, should be strictly avoided. xx xxxx.

What Constitutes Evil Company

Bad surroundings, obscene pictures, obscene songs, novels that deal with love, cinemas, theatres, the sight of pairing of animals, words which give rise to bad ideas in the mind—in short, anything that causes evil thoughts in the mind constitutes evil company. Whatever induces in us evil tendencies, impure ideas, and likewise, is to be considered as Kusanga. Kusanga is an antonym of Satsanga. It means 'the company of the evil.'

Place, food, water, family, neighbourhood, sight, literature, criticism, livelihood, and the mode of meditation or worship are the ten most important factors which according to their nature either serve for us as Satsanga or Kusanga.

Aspirants generally complain: "We are doing Sadhana for the last fifteen years. We have not made any solid spiritual progress." The obvious answer is that they have not totally shunned evil company. Newspapers deal with all sorts of worldly topics. Aspirants should entirely give up reading of newspapers. Reading of newspapers kindles worldly Samskaras, causes sensational excitement in the mind, makes the mind outgoing, produces an impression that the world is a solid reality, and makes one forget the Truth that underlies these names and forms.

The So-called Friends

If you put an ounce of alum in ten maunds of milk, the whole quantity of milk becomes unfit for drinking. Even so, evil company, even for a few minutes, will nullify the good effects created by Satsanga for ten years. Evil company is an enemy of

devotion. Give up evil company. Take recourse to Satsanga or company of the saints.

The so-called friends are real enemies. You cannot find even a single unselfish friend in this universe. Be careful. Friends come to have idle talks with you and they waste your time. They want to pull you down and make you also worldly. Do not be carried away by the flowery speech of such friends. Cut off connection ruthlessly. Live alone at all times. Trust in that Immortal Friend who dwells in your heart. He will give you whatever you want. If you cannot have positive Satsanga of Mahatmas, have negative Satsanga with books written by realised sages, saints and Bhagabatas.

7. SVADHYAYA (STUDY OF HOLY SCRIPTURIS) (SWAMI SIVANANDA)

WHY SVADHYAYA?

When the highest Truth is well said in a single phrase “Tat Tvam Asi” (That Thou Art), where is the need for endless lecturing and hearing on spiritual matters, and for writing and reading on the fundamentals of Sadhana?

One simple Brahma Sankalpa produced these countless universes. When the time comes, in the twinkling of an eye, you will realise the Self and attain liberation. While you are in a dark room, you grope in the dark and almost endlessly search for the torch. You stumble over many things and knock your head here and there. At last, you get the torch within your grasp. No more of this groping in the darkness, no more trials and travails; instantly there is light in the room. It is the search that takes a long time. It is the preparatory step in Sadhana that takes a considerable time.

Need for Constant Light

And then, even when you feel that the Truth is within your grasp, you ought to be vigilant, till it becomes part and parcel of

your consciousness, till you actually live in it. It is not enough if merely the light of Truth illumines a dark corner; you must live in it. When in a room you light the lamp, darkness vanishes; but if you put the light out, the darkness returns. Till the sun rises, there is need for a constant flame of light in the room to keep it illumined. Similarly, in the dark cavern of your heart, there is a lamp lit. It is Bhakti or a little understanding of the omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence of God. This gives you sufficient light to see things clearly and understand the nature of this universe, the Self and God. But, if you put this light out by negligence or wilful indifference to Sadhana in the false belief that you have attained the goal, you will again be enveloped by the darkness. You must keep the flame bright till the sun of Self-realisation arises within you. Then, there will be light and light alone everywhere. The darkness has vanished for ever. Light becomes part of the very nature. Darkness dare not approach you. What was Sadhana done with effort previously becomes Svabhava or second-nature now. Bhakti is the aspirant's Sadhana and the saint's Svabhava. Righteousness is the aspirant's Sadhana, the sage's Svabhava. At no time, therefore, these things are given up. The aspirant studies and hears the divine Leelas of the Lord as a necessary part of his Sadhana; the Siddha listens to them with great joy, as he naturally loves to listen to the Leelas of the Lord.

To Keep the Mind Fully Alive to the Ideal, Read Scriptures Daily

If, for a moment, the aspirant relaxes his vigilance and falls into a spiritual or ethical slumber, then the lower pull asserts itself, and immediately, the allegiance shifts from the higher to the lower self. If, at that time, he comes into contact with sensual objects, there takes place a setback in his spiritual life. Therefore, his alert vigilance and spiritual awareness, the state of being always awakened, has necessarily to be kept up at this stage.

One of the ways of doing this is Svadhyaya, study of scriptures. One of the most powerful methods of keeping the mind fully alive to the Ideal is reading of scriptures and the lives of saints daily. For, when

you read the lives of saints and spiritual books, a host of powerful and positive ideas rush to your mind and at once your mental powers are sharpened. They at once inspire the man and lift him and enable him to conquer the lower forces in his everyday life. Therefore, Svadhyaya should not be given up even for a single day in the life of the Sadhaka.

Be for Ever a Student

Study of scriptures bearing the sacred truths propounded by men of wisdom, and listening to the Leelas of the Lord, are never to be given up by sincere Sadhakas, at whatever stage of spiritual evolution they may be. Are you more advanced than Sri Sukadeva who was a born sage and Parivrajaka? Are you more advanced than the great sages who assembled at Naimisaranya to listen to Srimad Bhagavata being narrated by Sri Suta? Learn a lesson from these illustrious examples of great sages. Be for ever a Sadhaka. Be for ever an aspirant thirsting after spiritual knowledge. Be for ever a student. He and he alone is an old man who feels that he has learnt enough and has need for no more knowledge. He is a man dead while alive who does not feel a compelling eagerness to listen to the stories of the Lord's Leelas or to spiritual discourses. You can stave off old age and even death itself by preserving within you the youthful zeal and a devout eagerness to learn more, to practise more, and to realise more deeply, the great spiritual Truth which is inexhaustible, in spite of having been extolled and expounded by millions of saints, sages and seers from time immemorial.

Svadhyaya Prevents 'Back-sliding'

Moreover, forget not that on all sides you are surrounded by materialistic influences. If you are slack even for a day, the evil forces around you would find their opportunity and play havoc. The ball dropped on the top of the staircase takes less than a split-second to reach the ground, whereas it took much longer to take it up. In a moment of heedlessness, much could be lost. Life is short, time is fleeting; you cannot afford to lose an

inch of the ground that you have gained with so much effort, in your battle against this formidable foe Satan, Maya, Mara or the evil mind.

The Twin Saviours — Satsanga and Svadhyaya

Side by side with your work, you must do Japa, meditation, study of scriptures, Sat-vichara and Sat-vyavahara. Do not let this monkey-mind have a minute's respite. It is here that Satsanga and spiritual-literature come to your great aid. They are your saviours. How many sublime thoughts are brought to your very doors by the scriptures! Study the pages of the scriptures carefully. Underline the sentences that strike you as having a direct bearing on your life. Reflect over them in your leisure moments. Thus would you find that you are able to surmount many obstacles and jump over many pitfalls. Is the mind disinclined to read these passages over and over again? That is Maya's potent weapon to put you to sleep. Beware! Are you not taking the same food over and over again? You will have to go on reading and re-reading the self-same spiritual sentences over and over again till they are indelibly engraved on the tablet of your heart, till they become part and parcel of your inner nature.

Repetition Augments Inner Strength

Then will a fortress of Nirodha Samskaras be erected within you. Repetition gives strength. Repetition pushes the ideas into the innermost chambers of your heart and mind. Then the ideas will percolate your subconscious mind. The evil thoughts lurking there will be scorched and annihilated. You may not even know what wonders have been effected within you. Such is the salutary influence of repeatedly studying the same spiritual text. That is why our ancestors insisted on our ceremoniously reading a text like the Gita, the Ramayana, or the Bhagavata regularly every day, with faith and devotion. They will augment your inner strength. Your will will grow stronger. When thus the entire inner nature is transformed into divine nature, then a single effort to meditate will lead you to Nirvikalpa Samadhi and superconsciousness. You will then realise God in the twinkling of an eye.

8. SVADHYAYA OR PIOUS STUDY OF HOLY BOOKS

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

If you cannot get Satsanga of living Mahatmas, you can take recourse to the study of books written by great souls. This will constitute negative Satsanga. If you study Vivekachudamani, you are really having Satsanga of Sankaracharya for the time being. If you read Yoga Vasishtha, you are really having Satsanga with sage Vasishtha.

In the evening, four or five people can assemble together in a temple or a quiet room and can study for one or two hours either the Gita or the Upanishads, the Ramayana, the Bhagavatam, etc. Slowly your mind will be purified. You will get taste in the spiritual path. Women also should follow this method.

Most Important Books for Daily Reading

A devotee should study books which place before him the ideals of devotion, the glory, the sweetness and the Leelas of the Lord, the stories of saints and the practices which help him to cultivate devotion. Devotion develops by the study of such scriptures.

The most important books are the Ramayana, Srimad Bhagavatam, the Narayaneeyam, the Gita, the Vishnupurana, the Adhyatma Ramayana, the Tulasi Ramayana (Ramacharitamanas), Vishnu Sahasranama, Sandilya Sutras, the Siva Purana, the Devi Bhagavata, the Narada Pancharatram, Practice of Bhakti Yoga, Essence of Bhakti Yoga, Bhakti and Sankirtan, Bhaktirasamritam, songs of Alvars and Nayanars, Thevaram, Thiruvachakam, Dasabodha, Tukaram's Abhangas, Jnanesvari, Bhakti Rasayana, Bhakti Rasamritasindhu, etc.

How the Mind Deludes

Earthly objects you want. But with all that, you should never miss a day in meditation, in the study of the Gita, the Upanishads,

the Vivekachudamani, all full of spiritual gems. One Sloka will give you Santi:

*Vihaya Kaman Yah Sarvan
Pumamscharati Nisspruhah
Nirmamo Nirahankarah
Sa Santim Adhigachhati*

Never forget this.

The mind deludes you. "When I have two cows of my own, when I have a beautiful bungalow in Mussoorie, I will be happy": these are all poor ideas. We want people of Nachiketas' type, aspiring for something beyond time, space and causation. You should have such a strong aspiration, meditation and renunciation, though remaining in the world, like Chudalai, like Janaka. Every day you must study Vivekachudamani, Atma Bodha, Tattva Bodha, Panchadasi, Vichara Sagara — all these elevating Granthas — and Yoga Vasishtha, the beautiful monumental Grantha on Advaita Vedanta. These will give you Santi. *Nirmamo Nirahamkarah Sa Santim Adhigachhati*. He only gets grace.

Benefits of Svadhyaya

Be regular in the study of religious books, Ramayana, Bhagavatha, Yoga Vasishtha and other good books for Svadhyaya. If you reflect on the ideas of the Gita and fix the mind on these ideas, this itself is a form of lower Samadhi. Gita is a unique book for Svadhyaya. It contains the essence of all the Yogas and the cream of the Vedas. You can devote half an hour to three hours daily for this purpose according to the time at your disposal. Study of scriptures is Kriya Yoga or Niyama. It purifies the heart and fills the mind with sublime and elevating thoughts.

Svadhyaya inspires and elevates the mind to high spiritual altitude. It clears doubts. It weeds out unholy ideas. It cuts new spiritual grooves for the mind to move on. It reduces wandering of

the mind or Vikshepa. It helps concentration. It forms a kind of lower Savikalpa Samadhi. It serves pasture for the mind to graze upon. When you study the sacred books, you are in tune with the authors who are realised souls. You draw inspiration and become ecstatic.

When you cannot get positive Satsanga of Mahatmas, Svadhyaya clears doubts. It strengthens the flickering faith, it induces aspiration or strong yearning for liberation. It gives encouragement and illumination. It places before you a list of saints who trod the path, encountered and removed difficulties, and thus cheers you up with hope and vigour. It fills the mind with Sattva or purity; it inspires and elevates the mind. It helps concentration and meditation. It cuts new Sattvic grooves and makes the mind run in these new grooves.

To translate the precepts contained in the books of the sages and saints into action is to have your afflicted body soothed, to have your bruised soul healed, and to save yourself from all kinds of ills of life which are due to ignorance. Spiritual books act as consoling companions under all vexing circumstances, as ideal teachers in all difficulties, as guiding lights in the nights of nescience and folly, as panacea for evils and as shapers of destiny.

Acquire wisdom by digesting the books of sages and saints, philosophers and mystics. By wisdom, master the secrets of all sciences, know the exact nature of things, tune your localised being or individualised personality with the workings of the divine nature of the Laws of Truth. Wisdom is the key to the plenitude of power and joy. Wisdom annuls countless sufferings, innumerable sins, cuts the root of ignorance, and confers upon you peaceful harmony and absolute perfection.

9. THE VEDAS (SWAMI SIVANANDA) SANSKRIT LITERATURE

Sanskrit literature can be classified under six orthodox heads and four secular heads. The six orthodox sections form the authoritative scriptures of the Hindus. The four secular sections embody the latter developments in classical Sanskrit literature.

The six scriptures are: (i) Srutis, (ii) Smritis, (Hi) Itihasas, (iv) Puranas, (v) Agamas and (vi) Darsanas.

The four secular writings are: (i) Subhashitas, (ii) Kavyas, (iii) Natakas and (iv) Alankaras.

VEDA — THE REVEALED WISDOM

The *Srutis* are called the Vedas, or the *Amnaya*. The Hindus have received their religion through revelation, the Vedas. These are direct intuitive revelations and are held to be *Apaurusheya* or entirely superhuman, without any author in particular. The Veda is the glorious pride of the Hindus, nay, of the whole world!

The term Veda comes from the root ‘*Vid*’, to know. The word Veda means knowledge. When it is applied to scripture, it signifies a book of knowledge. The Vedas are the foundational scriptures of the Hindus. The Veda is the source of the other five sets of scriptures, why, even of the secular and the materialistic. The Veda is the storehouse of Indian wisdom and is a memorable glory which man can never forget till eternity.

The Vedas are the eternal truths revealed by God to the great ancient Rishis of India. The word *Rishi* means a Seer, from *dris*, to see. He is the *Mantra-Drashta*, a seer of Mantra or thought. The thought was not his own. The Rishis saw the truths or heard them. Therefore, the Vedas are what are heard (Sruti). The Rishi did not write. He did not create it out of his mind. He was the seer of thought which existed already. He was only the spiritual discoverer of the thought. He is not the inventor of the Veda.

THE UNIQUE GLORY OF THE VEDAS

The Vedas represent the spiritual experiences of the Rishis of yore. The Rishi is only a medium or an agent to transmit to people the intuitional experiences which he received. The truths of the Vedas are revelations. All the other religions of the world claim their authority as being delivered by special messengers of God to certain persons, but the Vedas do not owe their authority to any one. They are themselves the authority as they are eternal, as they are the Knowledge of the Lord.

Lord Brahma, the Creator, imparted the divine knowledge to the Rishis or Seers. The Rishis disseminated the knowledge. The Vedic Rishis were great realised persons who had direct intuitive perception of Brahman or the Truth. They were inspired writers. They built a simple, grand and perfect system of religion and philosophy from which the founders and teachers of all other religions have drawn their inspiration.

The Vedas are the oldest books in the library of man. The truths contained in all religions are derived from the Vedas and are ultimately traceable to the Vedas. The Vedas are the fountain-head of religion. The Vedas are the ultimate source to which all religious knowledge can be traced. Religion is of divine origin. It was revealed by God to man in the earliest times. It is embodied in the Vedas.

The Vedas are eternal. They are without beginning and end. An ignorant man may say how a book can be without beginning or end. By the Vedas, no books are meant. Vedas came out of the breath of the Lord. They are not the composition of any human mind. They were never written, never created. They are eternal and impersonal. The date of the Vedas has never been fixed. It can never be fixed. Vedas are eternal spiritual truths. Vedas are an embodiment of divine knowledge. The books may be destroyed, but the knowledge cannot be destroyed. Knowledge is eternal. In that sense, the Vedas are eternal.

DIVISIONS OF THE VEDAS

The Veda is divided into four great books: the Rig-Veda, the Yajur-Veda, the Sama-Veda and the Atharva-Veda. The Yajur-Veda is again divided into two parts, the Sukla and the Krishna. The Krishna or the Taittiriya is the older book and the Sukla or the Vajasaneyi is a later revelation to sage Yajnavalkya from the resplendent Sun-God.

The Rig-Veda is divided into twenty-one sections, the Yajur-Veda into one hundred and nine sections, the Sama-Veda into one thousand sections and the Atharva-Veda into fifty sections. In all, the whole Veda is thus divided into one thousand one hundred and eighty recensions.

Each Veda consists of four parts: the *Mantra-Samhitas* or hymns, the *Brahmanas* or explanations of Mantras or rituals, the *Aranyakas*, and the *Upanishads*. The division of the Vedas into four parts is to suit the four stages in a man's life.

The *Mantra-Samhitas* are hymns in praise of the Vedic God for attaining material prosperity here and happiness hereafter. They are metrical poems comprising prayers, hymns and incantations addressed to various deities, both subjective and objective. The *Mantra* portion of the Vedas is useful for the *Brahmacharins*.

The *Rig-Veda Samhita* is the grandest book of the Hindus, the oldest and the best. It is the Great Indian Bible, which no Hindu would forget to adore from the core of his heart. Its style, the language and the tone are most beautiful and mysterious. Its immortal Mantras embody the greatest truths of existence, and it is perhaps the greatest treasure in all the scriptural literature of the world. Its priest is called the *Hotri*.

The *Yajur-Veda Samhita* is mostly in prose and is meant to be used by the *Adhvaryu*, the Yajur-Vedic priest, for superfluous explanations of the rites in sacrifices, supplementing the *Rig-Vedic* Mantras.

The Sama-Veda Samhita is mostly borrowed from the Rig-Vedic Samhita, and is meant to be sung by the *Udgatri*, the Sama-Vedic priest, in sacrifices.

The Atharva-Veda Samhita is meant to be used by the *Brahma*, the Atharva-Vedic priest, to correct the mispronunciations and wrong performances that may accidentally be committed by the other three priests of the sacrifice.

The Brahmana portions guide people to perform sacrificial rites. They are prose explanations of the method of using the Mantras in the Yajna or the sacrifice. The Brahmana portion is suitable for the householders.

There are two Brahmanas to the Rig-Veda—the *Aitareya* and the *Sankhayana*. “The Rig-Veda”, says Max Muller, “is the most ancient book of the world. The sacred hymns of the Brahmanas stand unparalleled in the literature of the whole world; and their preservation might well be called miraculous.”

The Satapatha Brahmana belongs to the Sukla-Yajur-Veda. The Krishna-Yajur-Veda has the Taittiriya and the Maitrayana Brahmanas. The Tandya or Panchavimsa, the Shadvimsa, the Chhandogya, the Adbhuta, the Arsheya and the Upanishad Brahmanas belong to the Sama-Veda. The Brahmana of the Atharva-Veda is called the Gopatha. Each of the Brahmanas has got an Aranyaka.

The Aranyakas are the forest books, the mystical sylvan texts which give philosophical interpretations of the rituals. The Aranyakas are intended for the Vanaprasthas or hermits who prepare themselves for taking Sannyasa.

The Upanishads are the most important portion of the Vedas. The Upanishads contain the essence or the knowledge portion of the Vedas. The philosophy of the Upanishads is sublime, profound, lofty and soul-stirring. The Upanishads speak of the identity of the individual soul and the Supreme Soul. They reveal the most subtle

and deep spiritual truths. The Upanishads are useful for the Sannyasins.

The subject matter of the whole Veda is divided into *Karma-Kanda*, *Upasana-Kanda* and *Jnana-Kanda*. The Karma-Kanda or Ritualistic Section deals with various sacrifices and rituals. The Upasana-Kanda or Worship-Section deals with various kinds of worship or meditation. The Jnana-Kanda or Knowledge-Section deals with the highest knowledge of Nirguna Brahman. The Mantras and the Brahmanas constitute Karma-Kanda; the Aranyakas Upasana-Kanda; and the Upanishads Jnana-Kanda.

THE ESSENCE OF THE VEDAS

Live in the spirit of the teachings of the Vedas. Learn to discriminate between the permanent and the impermanent. Behold the Self in all beings, in all objects. Names and forms are illusory. Therefore sublate them. Feel that there is nothing but the Self. Share what you have,— physical, mental, moral or spiritual,— with all. Serve the Self in all. Feel when you serve others, that you are serving your own Self. Love thy neighbour as thyself. Melt all illusory differences. Remove all barriers that separate man from man. Mix with all. Embrace all. Destroy the sex-idea and body-idea by constantly thinking of the Self or the sexless, bodiless Atman. Fix the mind on the Self when you work. This is the essence of the teachings of the Vedas and sages of yore. This is real, eternal life in Atman. Put these things in practice in the daily battle of life. You will shine as a dynamic Yogi or a Jivamukta. There is no doubt of this.

10. THE UPANISHADS (SWAMI SIVANANDA)

A TREASURE OF WISDOM

Prostrations to Satchidananda Para-brahman, who is the prop, basis and source for everything! Salutations to all Brahman-vidya-Gurus or the preceptors of knowledge of Brahman!

There is no book in the whole world that is so thrilling,

soul-stirring and inspiring as the Upanishad. The philosophy taught by the Upanishads has been the source of solace for many, both in the East and the West. The human intellect has not been able to conceive of anything more noble and sublime in the history of the world than the teachings of the Upanishads.

The Upanishads contain the essence of the Vedas. They are the concluding portions of the Vedas and are the source of the Vedanta philosophy. Profound, original, lofty and sublime thoughts arise from every verse. They contain the direct spiritual experiences or revelations of seers, or sages, the Rishis. They are the products of the highest wisdom, supreme divine knowledge. Hence they stir the hearts of people and inspire them.

The glory or grandeur of the Upanishads cannot be adequately described in words, because words are finite and language is imperfect. The Upanishads have indeed greatly contributed to the peace and solace of mankind. They are highly elevating and soul-stirring. Millions of aspirants have drawn inspiration and guidance from the Upanishads. They are the cream of the Vedas. They are treasures of incalculable value. They are rich in profound philosophical thought. Their intrinsic value is very great. There is immense depth of meaning in the passages and verses. The language is beautiful.

The Upanishads give a vivid description of the nature of the Atman, the Supreme Soul, in a variety of ways, and expound suitable methods and aids to attain the Immortal Brahman, the Highest Purusha.

Ages have passed since they were first presented to the world. Even now they are remarkably sweet and charming. Their freshness is unique. Their fragrance is penetrating. Many cannot live today without the study of Upanishads daily. They give supreme food for the soul.

It is said that Schopenhauer, the renowned philosopher of the West, had always a book of the Upanishads on his table, and was in the habit, before going to bed, of performing his

devotions from its pages. He said, "In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads. It has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death."

The Upanishads have undoubtedly exercised and will continue to exercise a considerable influence on the religion and philosophy of India. They present a view of reality which would certainly satisfy the scientific, the philosophic, as well as the religious aspirations of man.

ORIGIN OF THE THE UPANISHADS

The Upanishads are metaphysical treatises which are replete with sublime conceptions of Vedanta and with intuitions of universal truths. The Indian Rishis and seers of yore endeavoured to grasp the fundamental truths of being. They tried to solve the problems of the origin, the nature and the destiny of man and of the universe. They attempted to grasp the meaning and value of *knowing* and *being*. They endeavoured to find a solution for the problems of the means of life and the world and of the relation of the individual to the 'Unseen,' or the Supreme Soul. They sought earnestly satisfactory solution of these profound questions: Who am I? What is this universe or Samsara? Whence are we born? On what do we rest? Where do we go? Is there any such thing as immortality, freedom, perfection, eternal bliss, everlasting peace, Atman, Brahman, or the Self, Supreme Soul, which is birthless, deathless, changeless, self-existent? How to attain Brahman or Immortality?

They practised right living, *Tapas*, introspection, self-analysis, enquiry and meditation on the pure, inner Self and attained Self-realisation. Their intuitions of deep truths are subtle and direct. Their inner experiences, which are direct, first-hand, intuitive and mystical, which no science can impeach, which all philosophies declare as the ultimate goal of their endeavours, are embodied in the sublime books called the Upanishads.

Some Western scholars have fixed the age of the

Upanishads as B.C. 600, or so. They regard that all of them belong to the pre-Buddhistic period. This is a sad mistake indeed. The Upanishads are the knowledge portion, or *Jnana-Kanda*, of the Vedas. They are eternal. They came out of the mouth of Hiranyagarbha, or Brahman. How can one fix the date of the Upanishads? They existed even before the creation of this world.

The Upanishads are a source of deep mystic divine knowledge which serves as the means of freedom from this formidable Samsara, earthly bondage. They are world-scriptures. They appeal to the lovers of religion and truth in all races, and at all times. They contain profound secrets of Vedanta, or Jnana-Yoga, and practical hints and clues which throw much light on the pathway of Self-realisation.

SIGNIFICANCE AND IDEAL

Knowledge of the Upanishads destroys ignorance, the seed of Samsara. 'Shad' means to 'shatter' or 'destroy'. By having knowledge of the Upanishads one is able to sit near Brahman, i.e., to attain Self-realisation. Hence the name 'Upanishad'. Knowledge of Brahman is called 'Upanishad', because it leads to Brahman and helps aspirants to attain Brahman. The term 'Upanishad' is applied to the book also in a secondary sense, by courtesy.

The following two ideas dominate the teaching of all the Upanishads: (1) Final emancipation can be attained only by knowledge of the Ultimate Reality, or Brahman (Brahmajnana); (2) He who is equipped with the four means of salvation, viz.. *Viveka* (discrimination), *Vairagya* (dispassion). *Shad-Sampat* (the six-fold treasure; self-control, etc.) and *Mumukshutva* (yearning for liberation), can attain Brahman. The Upanishads teach the philosophy of absolute unity.

The goal of men, according to the Upanishads, is realisation of Brahman. Self-realisation alone can dispel ignorance and bestow immortality, eternal bliss, and everlasting peace. Knowledge of Brahman alone can remove all sorrows,

delusion and pain.

The Upanishads are rightly called the Vedanta, the end of the Vedas, that which is reserved for those who have freed themselves from the bonds of formal religion.

The Upanishads are not meant for the masses, as they contain the highest speculations of philosophy. They are meant only for the select few, who are fit and worthy to receive the instructions. Hence the term 'Upanishad' signified at first 'secret teaching' or 'secret doctrine'. As already stated, Sadhana-Chatushtaya (the fourfold means) is the primary qualification of an aspirant of Jnana-Yoga, or one who seeks the knowledge of the Upanishads.

Study the Upanishads systematically. Acquire the four means of salvation. Meditate on the non-dual Atman or Brahman and attain ever-lasting Bliss!

11. THE SMRITIS (SWAMI SIVANANDA)

Next in importance to the *Sruti* are the *Smritis* or secondary scriptures. These are the ancient sacred law-codes of the Hindus dealing with the *Sanatana-Varnasrama-Dharma*. They supplement and explain the ritualistic injunctions called *Vidhis* in the Vedas. The Smritis or Dharma Sastras are founded on the Sruti. The Smritis are based on the teachings of the Vedas. The Smriti stands next in authority to the Sruti. It explains and develops *Dharma*. It lays down the laws which regulate Hindu national, social, family and individual obligations.

The works which are expressly called Smritis are the law books, Dharma Sastras. Smriti, in a broader sense, covers all Hindu Sastras save the Vedas.

The laws for regulating Hindu society from time to time are codified in the Smritis. The Smritis have laid down definite rules and laws to guide the individuals and communities in their daily conduct and to regulate their manners and customs. The Smritis have given

detailed instructions, according to the conditions of the time, to all classes of men regarding their duties in life.

The Hindu learns how he has to spend his whole life from these Smritis. The duties of Varnasrama and all ceremonies are clearly given in these books. The Smritis prescribe certain acts and prohibit some others for a Hindu, according to his birth and stage of life. The object of the Smritis is to purify the heart of man and take him gradually to the supreme abode of immortality and make him perfect and free.

These Smritis have varied from time to time. The injunctions and prohibitions of the Smritis are related to the particular social surroundings. As these surroundings and essential conditions of the Hindu society changed from time to time, new Smritis had to be compiled by the sages of different ages and different parts of India.

THE CELEBRATED HINDU LAW-GIVERS

From time to time, a great law-giver would take his birth. He would codify the existing laws and remove those which had become obsolete. He would make some alterations, adaptations, readjustments, additions and subtractions, to suit the needs of the time and see that the way of living of the people would be in accordance with the teachings of the Veda. Of such law-givers, Manu, Yajnavalkya and Parasara are the most celebrated persons. Hindu society is founded on, and governed by, the laws made by these three great sages. The Smritis are named after them. We have Manu Smriti or Manava Dharma-Sastra (the Laws of Manu or the Institutes of Manu), Yajnavalkya Smriti and Parasara Smriti. Manu is the greatest law-giver of the race. He is the oldest law-giver as well. The Yajnavalkya Smriti is next in importance to it. Manu Smriti and Yajnavalkya Smriti are universally accepted at the present time as authoritative works all over India. Yajnavalkya Smriti is chiefly consulted in all matters of Hindu Law. Even the Government of India is applying some of these laws.

There are eighteen main Smritis or Dharma Sastras. The most important are those of Manu, Yajnavalkya and Parasara. The other fifteen are those of Vishnu, Daksha, Samvarta, Vyasa, Harita, Satatapa, Vasishtha, Yama, Apastamba, Gautama, Devala, Sankha-Likhita, Usana, Atri and Saunaka.

The laws of Manu are intended for the Satya Yuga; those of Yajnavalkya are for the Treta Yuga; those of Sankha and Likhita are for the Dvapara Yuga; and those of Parasara are for the Kali Yuga.

The laws and rules which are based entirely upon our social positions, time and clime, must change with the changes in society and changing conditions of time and clime. Then only the progress of the Hindu society can be ensured.

NEED FOR A NEW LAW-CODE

It is not possible to follow some of the laws of Manu at the present time. We can follow their spirit and not the letter. Society is advancing. When it advances, it outgrows certain laws which were valid and helpful at a particular stage of its growth. Many new things which were not thought out by the old law-givers have come into existence now. It is no use insisting people to follow now those old laws which have become obsolete.

Our present society has considerably changed. A new Smriti to suit the requirements of this age is very necessary. Another sage will place before the Hindus of our days a new suitable code of laws. Time is ripe for a new Smriti. Cordial greetings to this sage.

THE SRUTI AND THE SMRITI

The Sruti and the Smriti are the two authoritative sources of Hinduism. *Sruti* literally means what is heard, and *Smriti* means what is remembered. Sruti is revelation and Smriti is tradition. Upanishad is a Sruti. Bhagavad Gita is a Smriti.

Sruti is direct experience. Great Rishis heard the eternal truths of religion and left a record of them for the benefit of

posternity. These records constitute the Vedas. Hence, Sruti is primary authority. Smriti is a recollection of that experience. Dharma Sastras also are books written by sages, but they are not the final authority. If there is anything in a Smriti which contradicts the Sruti, the Smriti is to be rejected.

THE INNER VOICE OF DHARMA

He who is endowed with a pure heart through protracted Tapas, Japa, Kirtan, meditation and service of Guru and who has a very clear conscience, can be guided by the inner voice in matters of Dharma or duty or moral action. The inner voice that proceeds from a clean heart filled with Sattva is, indeed, the voice of God or Soul or Antaryamin or Inner Ruler. This voice is more than Smriti. It is Smriti of Smritis. Purify your heart and train yourself to hear this inner voice. Keep your ear in tune with the 'voice'.

12. THE RAMAYANA (SWAMI SIVANANDA)

THE ITIHASAS

The Valmiki-Ramayana is one of the four *Itihasas*, the other three being: the Yoga Vasishtha, the Mahabharata and the Harivamsa. The Itihasas embody all that is in the Vedas, but only in a simpler manner. These are called the *Suhrit-Sammitas* or the Friendly Treatises, while the Vedas are called the *Prabhu-Sammitas* or the Commanding Treatises with great authority. These works explain the great universal truths in the form of historical narratives, stories and dialogues. These are very interesting volumes and are liked by all, from the inquisitive child to the intellectual scholar.

The Itihasas give us beautiful stories of absorbing interest and importance, through which all the fundamental teachings of Hinduism are indelibly impressed on one's mind. The law of Smritis and the principles of the Vedas are stamped firmly on the minds of the Hindus through the noble and marvellous deeds

of their great national heroes. We get a clear idea of Hinduism from these sublime stories.

The common man cannot comprehend the high abstract philosophy of the Upanishada and the Brahma Sutras. Hence, the compassionate sages Valmiki and Vyasa wrote the *Itihasas* for the benefit of common people. The same philosophy is presented with analogies and parables in a tasteful form to the common run of mankind.

VALMIKI RAMAYANA

Salutations to the great Valmiki, Lord Rama and other heroes of the Ramayana, and Sri Sita Devi, a remembrance of whom removes all obstacles in life and bestows prosperity, auspiciousness and success in all undertakings.

The Ramayana of Valmiki is perhaps the most ancient and glorious epic in the world. It is known as the *Adikavyam*, the first poem.

Valmiki Ramayana contains 24,000 Slokas which have been grouped into 500 chapters and again into seven *Kandas* or sections: *Bala*, *Ayodhya*, *Aranya*, *Kishkindha*, *Sundara*, *Yuddha* and *Uttara Kanda*.

Ramayana is a marvellous book which contains the essence of all the Vedas and all sacred scriptures. It is a treasure for man. It is a reservoir which contains the nectar of immortality. It delineates the character of a son who renounced the throne and the pleasures of the world to fulfil the words of his father and lived in the forest for a period of fourteen years. It depicts the character of a father who sends even his most beloved son into exile in order to keep up his word. It delineates the character of an ideal, chaste wife who is devoted to her husband till the end of her life and shares the adversities of her husband and serves him untiringly in the forest, and who also regards her husband as her God. Above all, it also points the character of a brother, who places brotherly affection above

everything else in this world and follows his brother to the forest leaving all the pleasures of the palace, and leading the way to ward off all dangers.

In Sri Rama we find a dutiful son, an ideal husband and king. In Lakshmana we find an ideal brother who shares the joys and sorrows of his eldest brother in city and forest. Can a Hindu wife have a more nobler exemplar than the peerless Sita? The very names of these great personages produce a holy thrill in the hearts of all those who read the Ramayana. Ramayana, thus, exercises a great moulding power on the lives of people. It contains object lessons for husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, friends and enemies,

Ramayana is highly beautiful, melodious and soul-stirring. It contains genuine classical Sanskrit poetry. Rama's young sons, Kusa and Lava, were the first reciters who sang to music this reputed work. It can be easily understood even by boys. It is suitable for beginners in the study of Sanskrit. It contains the highest ideals of Hindu culture and civilisation. It is a text-book of morals for the youths to inspire them to lofty and sublime ideals of conduct and character.

Ramayana is a book that is studied by all — man, woman or boy in India. The teachings of the sacred book are wrought into the very life of every Indian man, woman and boy. Mothers tell the stories to their children, teachers to their students, the old to the young. It is a non-detailed text-book for students in schools.

The description of *Nature* in the Ramayana is most sublime and beautiful. One can actually feel that the hills, the rivers, the trees and the birds are really one with human joys and sorrows. The description of battle scenes is magnificent. The chief characteristic of the work Ramayana is simplicity. Pathos and tenderness run through the whole poem. Poetry and morality are charmingly united. There is loftiness of moral tone.

Ramayana has historical basis. It is a book of great antiquity. It is not a mere allegoric poem. It is an inspiring and marvellous book for all times. It has loomed large for centuries over the destinies of many millions of people and will certainly continue to do so for ages to come.

The period at which Sri Rama lived was the closing of Treta Yuga. Dwapara Yuga began when he departed from this world.

Ramayana has been translated, both in verse and prose into Italian, French, English and Latin.

The sage Valmiki taught the Ramayana to his little disciples, Lava and Kusa, who were the first to sing it to the world. They came in the garb of ascetics from the hermitage of their teacher and sang the wonderful poem in the presence of their father and other heroes of the story.

Those who study the Sundara Kanda daily with faith and devotion attain wealth, happiness, sons and prosperity.

ITS ORIGIN

Valmiki once asked Narada, "O venerable Rishi! Please tell me whether there is a perfect man in this world who is at once virtuous, dutiful, truthful, noble, steadfast in duty and kind to all beings."

Narada replied. "There is such a one, a prince of Ikshwaku's line, named Rama. He is virtuous, brave, gentle and wise. He is a great hero. He loves his subjects immensely. He is the protector of *Dharma*. He is firm and steadfast. He is just and liberal. He is well versed in the Vedas and in the science of arms. He is unique in the possession of virtues and matchless in beauty. He is an obedient son, a kind brother, a loving husband, a faithful friend, an ideal king, a merciful enemy and a lover of all living beings. All people adore him."

Valmiki, reflecting over this glowing description, was walking along the banks of the river Tamasa. He happened to see a pair of *Krounchas* (birds) sporting with each other in love. Sud-

denly the male bird was shot dead by a cruel fowler and the female, seeing her mate rolling on the ground in the agony of pain, screamed out pitifully her lamentations. The sage felt great pity at the sight of the fallen bird and his grieving spouse and burst forth in the exclamation: "Never, O fowler, shalt thou obtain rest, as thou hast killed a Krouncha in the midst of his love." These words came out spontaneously in the form of a musical verse having four feet of eight syllables each (*Anushtup* metre).

Then Brahma Himself, the creator of the world, came before the poet and said, "Sing Rama's charming story in the same melodious metre. As long as this world endures, as long as the stars shine in heaven, so long shall thy song spread among men." So saying, Brahma vanished. He inspired the poet with the knowledge of Sri Rama's whole story.

Then Valmiki sat down in meditation and saw every event in Sri Rama's story in detail in his Yogic vision. Then he began to write the Ramayana. The melody for the Ramayana was born from the heart of love and pity for the wounded bird. When applied to the Ramayana, the verse of Valmiki, sung out of pity for the Krouncha, can be interpreted thus: Sri Rama and Sita represent the two birds; Ravana represents the cruel hunter. Sita was cruelly separated from Rama by the hunter Ravana. There is a slight similarity in both these cases. The hunter's cruel act was a fore-runner to Valmiki's inspiration to narrate the Ramayana.

ITS CHARACTERS

Sri Rama, the hero of Valmiki's Ramayana is an embodiment of every social and domestic virtue. His sense of filial duty is unparalleled in the history of the world. He was an ideal king and his government was styled as "*Ramarajya*," i.e., an ideal or perfect government. He was an ideal husband and father and a model of all the domestic virtues.

His adherence to duty was remarkable and illustrious. He even abandoned his wife who was his life, heart and soul and

sacrificed his personal happiness to ensure the good of his subjects. He was prepared to sacrifice his very life even to secure the contentment of his people and to stick to duty.

Though Rama was the Supreme Being Himself, throughout his life he behaved like an ordinary man, because Ravana had a boon that he could not be killed by any being except a human being. So Sri Rama acted as an ordinary man only.

Sri Rama is known as *Maryada Purushottama*. He adhered to the injunctions of the Shastras. He led the life of an ideal householder to teach the world the *Dharma* of a *Grihastha*. He never swerved an inch from truth and duty.

Sita is the heroine of the Ramayana. She is the ideal of womanhood itself. She never led a life of ease and comfort. She was serene and firm amidst sorrows and trials. She was matchless among women. She was put to very severe tests in which her purity, courage, patience and other virtues were severely tried and she came out nobly successful. She was the Hindu ideal of womanly virtues. She was the most charming picture of feminine excellence. Hindu women have glorious reputation for their disinterested love and self-sacrifice. Sita was a peerless embodiment of these virtues. She never thought of her own comfort and happiness. She lived to serve Sri Rama and make him happy.

ESOTERIC SIGNIFICANCE

The vast majority of people do not study Ramayana with faith and reverence, under great souls. They jump to hasty conclusions by mere superficial reading of the Ramayana here and there. They read the epic like reading novels with the attitude of curiosity-mongering and cavilling spirit. That is the reason why they are not able to comprehend the truths, the depths and secrets of the Ramayana.

The allegoric meaning of Ramayana is this: Ravana represents *Ahamkara* or egoism. His ten heads represent the ten senses. The city of Lanka is the nine-gated city of the physical

body. Vibhishana represents the intellect. Sita is peace. Rama is Jnana. To kill the ten-headed Ravana is to kill egoism and curb the senses. To recover Sita is to attain peace which the Jiva has lost on account of desires. To attain Jnana is to have Darshan of Rama or the Supreme Self.

He who crosses the ocean of *Moha* and destroys the Rakshasas, *Raga* and *Dwesha* (likes and dislikes), is a Yogi who is united with *Shanti* or peace, ever resting in the Atman and enjoying the eternal bliss of the Soul. He is an Atma-Rama.

Sri Rama stands for the “Good” (*Sattva*); Ravana for the “Evil”. Sri Rama and Ravana fought with each other. Eventually Sri Rama became victorious. Positive always overcomes the negative. Good always overcomes evil.

GLORY OF WOMEN

In Kali Yuga, most of the people are of devotional nature; they all do some kind of Tapas, Japa, prayer and meditation. Hindu ladies are devotional in their very nature. The Hindu religion is maintained through the devotional nature of the ladies. Devotion to God is a peculiar characteristic of a Hindu lady. It is only those who have imbibed Western education and have scientific knowledge that have become confirmed atheists. They have no faith in chanting Mantra. Their fate is highly deplorable. Justice Woodroffe has written a most valuable book entitled “Garland of Letters”, There he has treated this subject quite rationally. The only remedy for them to acquire devotion is *Satsanga*. *Satsanga* will overhaul their worldly nature, change their materialistic *Samskaras* and infuse genuine *Bhakti*. Hear the famous couplet of Tulasidas:

Bin Satsang Viveka Na Hoi;
Rama Kripa Bin Sulab Na Soi.

The grace of Rama cannot be obtained without the help of *Satsanga* and discrimination.

Glory to that immortal Valmiki, the author of the Ramayana! Glory to Ramayana, the most sacred book in the world! Glory to Sri Rama, the hero; and Sri Sita, the heroine of this celebrated epic! May their blessings be upon you all!

13. THE YOGA VASISHTHA (SWAMI SIVANANDA) ITS ORIGIN AND GLORY

The earliest work in Sanskrit on Vedanta of the highest order is the *Vasishta Maha Ramayana* or *Yoga Vasishtha*. This monumental work is one without a second in Sanskrit literature. Vasishtha, the great sage, taught the principles of Vedanta to his royal pupil, Sri Rama, the victor of Ravana and hero of the epic, *Ramayana*. He narrated beautiful and interesting stories to illustrate the principles. The book is written in the language of Valmiki.

It is the crest-jewel of all the works on Vedanta. It is a masterpiece. A study of the book raises a man to the lofty heights of divine splendour and bliss. It is really a vast store of wisdom. Those who practise *Atma Chintana* or *Brahma Abhyasa* or Vedantic meditation will find a priceless treasure in this marvellous book. He who studies the book with great interest and one-pointedness of mind cannot go without attaining Self-realisation. The practical hints on *Sadhana* are unique. Even the most worldly-minded man will become dispassionate and will attain peace of mind, solace and consolation.

The *Yoga Vasishtha* was once one of the most widely read books in India. It greatly influenced the general philosophical thought. The late Pundit Brindawana Saraswati of Benares had read the *Yoga Vasishtha* one hundred and sixty-five times. It is a comprehensive, deep, systematic and literary philosophical work of ancient India.

The name is derived from the sage Vasishtha. Though the book is called *Yoga Vasishtha*, it treats of Jnana only. Practical Yoga

is dealt with in two stories. The word “Yoga” is used in the title of this work in its generic sense. It is known by the name *Jnana Vasishtham* also.

Rishi Valmiki, the author of the Ramayana, compiled this remarkable book. He related the whole of Yoga Vasishtha to Rishi Bharadwaja as it passed between Sri Rama and sage Vasishtha.

There are two books, namely, the *Brihat Yoga Vasishtha* and the *Laghu Yoga Vasishtha*. The former is a big book containing 32,000 Granthas or Slokas or 64,000 lines. “Brihat” means big. The latter book contains 6,000 Granthas. “Laghu” means small.

The *Yoga Vasishtha* contains a system of ancient philosophical thought unique in its kind. This is a valuable heritage from the hoary past of this sacred land known as Bharatavarsha or Aryavarta. The system of thought that is presented in this book is a highly valuable contribution not only to Indian philosophical thought but also to the philosophical thought of the world at large.

Those whose minds are turned from this world, who have become indifferent towards the objects of this world and who are thirsting for liberation, will be really benefited by a study of this precious book. They will find in this book a vast mine of knowledge and practical spiritual instructions for guidance in their daily life. The *Yoga Vasishtha* first enunciates a doctrine in its various aspects and then makes it very lucid through interesting stories. This is a book for constant study as many times as possible. It must be read and re-read, studied and mastered.

The *Yoga Vasishtha* deals with the subject of effecting union of the individual soul with the Supreme Soul amidst all the trials and tribulations of life. It prescribes various directions for the union of the Jivatman and Paramatman.

The nature of Brahman or *Sat* and the various methods of attaining Self-realisation are vividly described in this book. The main enquiry regarding the final beatitude or *summum bonum* is

beautifully dealt with. This book embodies in itself the science of ontology, the knowledge of the Self, the principles of psychology, the science of emotions, the tenets of ethics and practical morality, discourses on theology, etc. The philosophy of *Yoga Vasishtha* is sublime.

ITS DIVISION AND DOCTRINE

The book consists of six *Prakaranas* or sections, namely; 1. *Vairagya Prakarana* (on dispassion or indifference); 2. *Mumukshu Prakarana* (on longing for liberation); 3. *Utpatti Prakarana*, (on creation or origin) ; 4. *Sthiti Prakarana* (on preservation or existence); 5. *Upasanti Prakarana* (on dissolution or quiescence); and 6. *Nirvana Prakarana* (on liberation). According to *Yoga Vasishtha*, this world of experience with various objects, time, space and laws, is a creation of the mind, that is, an idea or *Kalpana*. Just as objects are created by the mind in dream, so also everything is created by the mind in the waking state also. Expansion of the mind is *Sankalpa*. *Sankalpa*, through its power of differentiation, generates this universe. Time and space are only mental creations. Through the play of the mind in objects, nearness seems to be a great distance and *vice versa*. Through the force of the mind, a *Kalpa* is regarded as a moment and *vice versa*. A moment of waking experience may be experienced as years in dream. The mind can have the experience of miles within a short span and miles can also be experienced as a span only. Mind is not anything different and separate from Brahman. Brahman manifests Himself as mind. Mind is endowed with creative power. Mind is the cause of bondage and liberation.

The doctrine of *Drishti-Srishtivada* is expounded in the *Yoga Vasishtha*. In some places Vasishtha speaks of the *Ajativada* of Sri Gaudapadacharya, the great Guru of Sri Sankara. You begin to see and then there is creation. This is *Drishti-Srishti-vada*. This world does not exist at all in the three periods of time. This is *Ajativada* or non-origin of the universe.

This is a most inspiring book. Every student of Vedanta keeps this book for constant study. It is a constant companion for a student on the path of Jnana Yoga. It is not a *Prakriya Grantha*; it does not deal with the Prakriyas or categories of Vedanta. Only advanced students can take up this book for their study. Beginners should first study the *Atma Bodha*, *Tattwa Bodha* and *Atmanatma Viveka* of Sri Sankara, and the *Pancheekaran* before they take up the study of Yoga Vasishtha.

MOKSHA ACCORDING TO YOGA VASISHTHA

Moksha, according to Yoga Vasishtha, is the attainment of the essence of the bliss or Brahman through knowledge of the Self, it is freedom from births and deaths. It is the immaculate and imperishable seat of Brahman wherein there are neither *Sankalpas* nor *Vasanas*. The mind attains its quiescence here. All the pleasures of the whole world are a mere drop when compared to the infinite bliss of Moksha.

That which is called Moksha is neither in *Devaloka* nor in *Patala* nor on earth. When all desires are destroyed, the extinction of the expansive mind alone is Moksha. Moksha has neither space nor time in itself; nor is there in it any state external or internal. If the illusory idea of "I" or *Ahamkara* perishes, the end of thoughts (which is Maya) is experienced, and that is Moksha. Extinction of all *Vasanas* constitutes Moksha. *Sankalpa* is only Samsara; its annihilation is Moksha. It is only *Sankalpa* destroyed beyond resurrection, that constitutes the immaculate Brahmic seat or Moksha. Moksha is freedom from all sorts of pains (*Sarva-Dukha Nivitti*) and the attainment of supreme bliss (*Paramananda Prapti*). "Duhkha" means pain or suffering. Births and deaths generate the greatest pain. Freedom from births and deaths is freedom from all sorts of pain. *Brahma Jnana* or knowledge of the Self alone will give Moksha. The quiescence produced in the mind by the absence of desires for objects is Moksha.

Moksha is not a thing to be achieved. It is already there. You are in reality not bound. You are ever pure and free. If you were really bound, you could never become free. You have to know that you are the immortal, all-pervading Self. To know that, is to become That. This is Moksha. This is the goal of life. This is the *summum bonum* of existence. That state of non-attraction of the mind, when neither "I" nor any other self exists for it, and when it abandons the pleasures of the world, should be known as the path that leads to Moksha.

The Absolute, according to the Yoga Vasishtha, is Satchidananda Para Brahman, who is non-dual, partless, infinite, self-luminous, changeless and eternal. He is the ultimate substance. He is the unity behind the subject and the object of experience. He is one homogeneous essence. He is all-pervading. He is beyond description. He is nameless, colourless, odourless, tasteless, timeless, spaceless, deathless and birthless.

QUALIFICATIONS OF THE STUDENT

He whose mind is calm, who is endowed with the "Four Means" of salvation, who is free from defects and impurities can realise the Self intuitively through meditation. The scriptures and the spiritual preceptor cannot show us Brahman. They can only guide us and give us a hint by way of analogies and illustrations.

Shanti (quiescence of mind), *Santosha* (contentment), *Satsanga* (association with sages) and *Vichara* (Atmic enquiry) are the four sentinels who guard the gates of Moksha. If you make friendship with them, you will easily enter the kingdom of Moksha. Even if you keep company with one of them, he will surely introduce you to his other three companions.

The student should have an unshakable conviction that Brahman is the only Reality, that everything is Brahman, that Brahman is the very Self of all beings. Then he should realise this truth through direct cognition or intuition (*Aparokshanubhava*). This direct

knowledge of Brahman alone is the means of liberation.

There is no difference between the waking and dream experiences. The waking state is a long dream. The dream experiences become unreal as soon as man comes back to his waking state. Even so, the waking state becomes unreal for a sage who has attained Self-realisation. For the man who dreams, the waking state becomes unreal.

ESSENCE OF YOGA VASISHTHA

If you attain knowledge of the Self or Brahma Jnana, you will be freed from the trammels of births and deaths. All your doubts will vanish and all Karmas will perish. It is through one's own efforts alone that the immortal, all blissful Brahmic seat can be obtained.

The slayer of the Atman is only the mind. The form of the mind is only Sankalpas. The true nature of the mind consists in the Vasanas. The actions of the mind alone are truly termed actions (Karmas). The universe is nothing but the mind manifesting as such through the power of Brahman. The mind contemplating on the body becomes the body itself and then, enmeshed in it, is afflicted by it.

The mind manifests itself as the external world in the shape of pains or pleasures. The mind subjectively is consciousness. Objectively, it is this universe. By its enemy, discrimination, the mind is rendered to the quiescent state of Para Brahman. The real bliss is that which arises when the mind, divested of all desires through the eternal Jnana, destroys its subtle form. The Sankalpas and Vasanas which you generate, enmesh you as in a net. The self-light of Para Brahman alone is appearing as the mind or this universe.

Persons without Atmic enquiry will see as real this world, which is nothing but of the nature of Sankalpas. The expansion of this mind alone is Sankalpa. Sankalpa, through its power of differentiation, generates this universe. Extinction of Sankalpas alone is Moksha.

The enemy of the Atman is this impure mind only which is filled with excessive delusion and hosts of worldly thoughts. There is no vessel on this earth to wade through the ocean of rebirths other than mastery of the antagonistic mind.

The original sprout of the painful Ahamkara, with its tender stem of rebirths, at length ramifies itself everywhere with its long branches of "mine" and "thine" and yields its unripe fruits of death, disease, old age and sorrows. This tree can be destroyed to its root only by the fire of Jnana.

All the heterogeneous visibles, perceived through the organs of sense, are only unreal; that which is real is Para Brahman or the Supreme Soul.

If all objects which have an enchanting appearance become eyesores and present the very reverse of the former feelings, then the mind is destroyed. All your properties are useless. All wealth lands you in dangers. Freedom from desires will take you to the eternal, blissful abode.

Destroy Vasanas and Sankalpas. Kill egoism. Annihilate this mind. Equip yourself with the "Four Means". Meditate on the pure, immortal, all-pervading Self or Atman. Get knowledge of the Self and attain immortality, everlasting peace, eternal bliss, freedom and perfection.

A Jivanmukta or a realised soul roams about happily. He has neither attractions nor attachments. He has nothing to attain nor has he anything to give up. He works for the well-being of the world. He is free from desires, egoism and greed. He is in solitude though he works in the busiest part of a city.

May you all drink the nectar of Yoga Vasishtha! May you all taste the honey of wisdom of the Self! May you all become Jivanmuktas in this very birth! May the blessings of sage Vasishtha, sage Valmiki and other Brahma-Vidya Gurus be upon you all! May you all partake of the essence of the bliss of Brahman !

14. THE MAHABHARATA

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

THE GREATNESS OF THE EPIC

MAHABHARATA — the very mention of the name gives a thrill of holy ideas. This is a great *epic* heroic poem. It contains one hundred thousand verses. It contains the essence of all scriptures. It is an encyclopaedia of ethics, knowledge, politics, religion, philosophy and *Dharma*. If you cannot find anything here, you cannot find it anywhere else.

It contains eighteen *Parvas* or sections *viz.*.. *Adi Parva*, *Sabha Parva*, *Vana Parva*, *Virata Parva*, *Udyoga Parva*, *Bhishma Parva*, *Drona Parva*, *Karna Parva*, *Shalya Parva*, *Sauptika Parva*, *Stree Parva*, *Shanti Parva*, *Anushasana Parva*, *Asvamedha Parva*, *Ashramavasika Parva*, *Mausala Parva*, *Mahaprasthanika Parva* and *Swargarohanika Parva*. Each *Parva* contains many sub-*Parvas* or sub-sections.

This wonderful book was composed by Sri Vyasa (Krishna Dvaipayana) who was the grandfather of the heroes of the epic. He taught this epic to his son Suka and his disciples Vaisampayana and others. King Janamejaya, son of Parikshit, the grandson of the heroes of the epic, performed a great sacrifice. The epic was recited by Vaisampayana to Janamejaya at the command of Vyasa. Later on, Suta recited the Mahabharata as was done by Vaisampayana to Janamejaya, to Saunaka and others, during a sacrifice performed by Saunaka in Naimisaranya, which is near Sitapur in Uttar Pradesh.

It is very interesting to remember the opening and closing lines of this great epic. It begins with: "Vyasa sang of the ineffable greatness and splendour of Lord Vasudeva, who is the source and support for everything, who is eternal, unchanging, self-luminous, who is the Indweller in all beings, and of the truthfulness and righteousness of the Pandavas." It ends with: "With raised hands, I shout at the top of my voice; but alas, no one hears my

words which can give them Supreme Peace, Joy and Eternal Bliss. One can attain wealth and all objects of desire through *Dharma* (righteousness). Why do not people practise *Dharma*? One should not abandon *Dharma* at any cost, even at the risk of his life. One should not relinquish *Dharma* out of passion or fear or covetousness or for the sake of preserving one's life. This is the Bharata Gayatri. Meditate on this daily, O man! when you retire to sleep and when you rise from your bed every morning. You will attain everything. You will attain glory, fame, prosperity, long life, eternal bliss, everlasting peace and immortality."

THE EPIC IN A NUTSHELL

The Mahabharata is the history of the Great War of India between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. The two brothers Dhritarashtra and Pandu were born through sage Vyasa after the death of Vichitravirya. Dhritarashtra being blind, Pandu succeeded to the throne but he entrusted the kingdom to his elder brother and himself proceeded to forest where his five sons Yudhishtira, etc., were born and were called the "Pandavas." Dhritarashtra also had one hundred children in Duryodhana and others, who were called the "Kauravas." Pandu died during the infancy of his sons and Dhritarashtra continued to rule the kingdom with the help of their granduncle Bhishma, who had pledged himself to lifelong celibacy. The Pandava and Kaurava princes were brought up together and also educated and trained alike through Dronacharya. Both sets of princes considered themselves entitled to the kingdom and looked upon the other with hostility and their feelings and relations grew strained from day to day. On account of persecution by the Kauravas, the Pandavas left their home and suffered much hardship and pain, but on their marriage with the daughter of Drupada, king Dhritarashtra sent for the Pandavas and made over half the kingdom to them. The Pandavas improved their country and established their capital at Indraprastha and then performed the horse-sacrifice with great pomp. The Kauravas were also invited there but on seeing the

good fortune of the Pandavas and being offended by jokes made at them, they were overcome with jealousy and resentment and returned home with feelings of enmity and revenge. They then conspired against the Pandavas and invited them to gamble and thereby they won all their wealth, kingdom and their person and also insulted and ill-treated their wife, Draupadi, in the presence of all. In the end, it was settled that the Pandavas should go out in exile to the forest for twelve years and pass another year in secrecy and on return from the exile be entitled to get back their lost kingdom. The Pandavas did all this but on their return the Kauravas refused to return the kingdom. This gave rise to the great family war in which all the Kauravas and the two armies were annihilated and the Pandavas alone survived and got the victory.

The Pandavas were assisted by Sri Krishna and other relations, Drupada, Virata, etc., and their forces numbered seven battalions (Akshauhinis). The Kauravas were also assisted by their relations and friends and their forces numbered eleven battalions. The Pandavas were successful on account of their righteous cause and divine grace.

The blind Dhritarashtra represents *Avidya* or ignorance; Yudhishtira represents *Dharma*; Duryodhana *Adharma*; Draupadi *Maya*; Bhishma dispassion; Dussasana evil quality; Sakuni jealousy and treachery; Arjuna the individual soul; and Lord Krishna the Supreme Soul. *Antahkarana* is the Kurukshetra.

HEROIC CHARACTERS

The Mahabharata war was a just war. If you go through the speech given by Bhishma to Yudhishtira, you will know the usages of righteous war. A brave hero would fight only with an enemy of equal strength and on equal vantage. This was the motto of every brave soldier who engaged himself in warfare in days of yore in India. Perfect justice and fairness in everything was rigidly observed on both sides. There was no fighting during nights; when

the enemy had no arms in his hands, no arrows were aimed at him.

The Mahabharata, the most renowned epic of India, is the only book of its kind in the whole world. It contains countless stories besides the main episode — the *Mahabharata* — which teach moral lessons or illustrate distinguishing characteristics of the ancients of India. It contains the history of ancient India and all the details of its political, social and religious life. The stories, songs, nursery tales, anecdotes, parables, the discourses and sayings contained in this epic are marvellous and highly instructive. It contains the brilliant records of mighty heroes, warriors of great prowess, deep thinkers, profound philosophers, sages and ascetics and devoted wives of chastity. The beauty and charm of the language is extremely striking and attractive.

One is struck with amazement and becomes tongue-tied when he reads the marvellous strength of Bhima, of the wonderful skill in archery and bowmanship of Arjuna, of the dexterity of Sahadeva in the use of swords and of the profound knowledge of Nakula in astronomy, and of the extreme righteous conduct and justice of Yudhishtira in all matters. The deeds of heroism done by Bhishma, Karna, Drona, Parasurama. Jayadratha, Dhrishtadyumna and many others are superhuman. These heroes did severe Tapas and obtained rare boons from the Lord. That is the reason why they did marvellous heroic deeds which baffle description.

Yudhishtira did not wield arms. He did not take active part in the war-front. He did not use bow and arrows. He had neither the strength of Bhima nor the skill of Arjuna in archery. But he was an embodiment of righteousness. He was an incarnation of *Dharma*. That is the reason why he was called as *Dharmaputra*, He was a wise and ideal king. He established peace and order. He guided his brothers in the path of truth and righteousness and checked them whenever they went astray. Arjuna bore manfully the insults which Draupadi was subjected to before his eyes. He could not disobey Yudhishtira

or show him the least disrespect. All the brothers were meek and submissive before Yudhishtira, however mighty and heroic they were. They could crush mountains and dry up oceans with their arrows. They were terrible before their opponents but they were mild and gentle before Yudhishtira and were ever ready to obey his commands. They would never speak a word in opposition. Such was the awe-inspiring personality of Yudhishtira. Had it not been for Yudhishtira, Arjuna and his brothers would not have won the war. Yudhishtira was the founder of an empire. He is an inspiring example, even now, for the rulers of kingdoms and states. He was an embodiment of justice, patience, steadiness, purity, truthfulness and forbearance.

The kings had a complete knowledge of the scriptures and of right and wrong. They practised rigid austerities also. That is the reason why Yudhishtira and Nala were able to bear the privations and hardships. They rolled in wealth and yet they had the strength and power of endurance to walk barefooted in forests and sleep on a bed of stones. They had such a rigorous training and discipline in suffering.

Draupadi, Savitri, Kunti, Madri and Damayanti were highly devoted to their husbands. They were bold and fearless when they were under extreme difficulties, hardships, sufferings and privations. They were pious. They bore the sufferings through the force of their chastity and moral strength. They were ideal wives and ideal mothers. That is the reason why they have left an immortal name behind them.

The Mahabharata still exerts a marvellous influence over the millions of Hindus. The lustre and high renown of these brilliant personages of Mahabharata has not suffered a diminution, in spite of the ravages of cruel time. Their character was untainted and sublime. Hence their deeds also were admirable, laudable and sublime. Determination has ever been the key to success in the lives of great men of all countries. Heroes

would not move an inch from the path of their duty when they are called upon to perform it. They were fiery in their determination. They had iron will.

The noble and heroic grandsire Bhishma — who had control over his death and who was unconquerable in war even by the gods — still inspires us with the spirit of self-sacrifice, undaunted courage and purity. Yudhishtira is still a model of justice and righteousness. Remembrance of his very name generates a thrill in our hearts and goads us to tread the path of truth and virtue. Karna still lives in our hearts on account of his extreme munificence and liberality. Karna's name has become proverbial. People even now say, whenever they come across a very generous man, "He is like Karna in gifts."

Arjuna was the bravest of all the five Pandavas. Arjuna had got Draupadi by winning in the selection match and he had defeated the Kauravas on several occasions. He was a devoted friend of Sri Krishna who had him married to his sister Subhadra, even against the wishes of his elder brother Balarama. Sri Krishna assisted the Pandavas in the great war on account of Arjuna and by acting as his charioteer, led him to victory.

Even now, we admire Arjuna as a perfect man and worship Lord Krishna as our Protector and Saviour. Whenever we are in trouble and distress we pray to Him, "O Lord! Save us just as you saved Draupadi and Gajendra in days of yore."

THE MESSAGE OF THE MAHABHARATA

The sufferings of the Pandavas and Draupadi, Nala and Damayanti, Savitri and Satyavan, clearly explain to us the fact or hard truth that the goal of life or perfection can only be attained through pain and suffering. Pain is the means through which man is moulded, disciplined and strengthened. Just as impure gold is turned into pure gold by melting it in the crucible, so also the impure and imperfect weak man is rendered pure, perfect and strong, by being melted in the crucible of pain and suffering. Therefore, one should not be afraid of pain and sufferings. They

are blessings in disguise. They are eye-openers. They are silent teachers. They turn the mind towards God and instil mercy in the heart, strengthen the will and develop patience and power of endurance, which are the pre-requisites for God-Realisation.

The message of the Mahabharata is the message of Truth and Righteousness. The great epic produces a moral awakening in the readers and exhorts them to tread the path of *Satya* and *Dharma*. It urges them strongly to do good deeds, practise *Dharma*, cultivate dispassion by realising the illusory nature of this universe and its vain glories and sensual pleasures, and attain Eternal Bliss and Immortality. It induces people to do what Yudhishtira did and abandon what Duryodhana did. Stick to *Dharma* tenaciously. You will attain everlasting happiness and Moksha, the *summum bonum* of life. This is the final purport or central teachings of the Mahabharata.

May the teachings of this illustrious and ancient epic guide you in every walk of your life. May you stick to *Dharma*. May the great characters of the Mahabharata inspire you! May you imbibe the righteousness of Yudhishtira, the purity of Bhishma, the courage of Arjuna and the liberality of Karna! Glory to Sri Bhagavan Vyasa, the grandsire of the heroes, the author of the Mahabharata, a Chiranjeevi and an Avatar of Lord Hari. May His blessings be upon you all!

15. THE BHAGAVAD GITA

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

INTRODUCTION

The Bhagavad Gita is a dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna, narrated in the Bhishma-Parva of the Mahabharata. It comprises eighteen chapters of a total of 701 Sanskrit verses. Considerable matter has been condensed and compressed within these verses. On the battle-field of Kurukshetra, Lord Krishna, during

the course of His most interesting and instructive talk with Arjuna, revealed the profound, sublime and soul-stirring spiritual truths, and expounded to him the rare secrets of Yoga, Vedanta, Bhakti and Karma. All the teachings of Lord Krishna were subsequently recorded as the Song Celestial or the Bhagavad Gita by Sri Bhagavan Vyasa for the benefit of humanity at large. The world is under a great debt of gratitude to Sri Vyasa who has presented this Celestial Song to humanity for their daily conduct in life, spiritual uplift and Self-realisation. Only those who are self-controlled and are endowed with faith can reap the full benefit of the Gita, which is the Science of the Soul.

In the whole world-literature there is no book so elevating and so inspiring as the Gita. India is held in high esteem by the Westerners on account of the Gita. Mahatma Gandhi once visited one of the biggest libraries in London and asked the librarian: "What spiritual book is most often issued?" The librarian replied: "It is the Gita." The Gita is very popular throughout the world. It has been translated into almost all the major languages of the world.

Everyone of you should study very carefully the Gita, a sublime and soul-stirring book that can bestow on you supreme peace, immortality and eternal bliss.

There are countless commentaries on the Gita at the present day. A volume can be written on each verse. A busy man with Karmic tendencies will be benefited by "Gita Rahasya", the commentary of Sri Bala Gangadhar Tilak: a man of devotion by studying Sridhara's commentary; and a man of reason by Sri Sankara's commentary.

GLORY OF THE GITA

The Gita is a unique book for all ages. It is a book that comes under the category of *Prasthanatraya*, the authoritative books of the Hindu religion. The Gita is the Immortal Song of the Soul, which bespeaks the glory of life. The instructions that are inculcated by Lord Krishna are for the whole world. It is a standard book on Yoga for all. The language is as simple as it could be. Even

a man who has an elementary knowledge of Sanskrit, can go through the book. It deals with the four Yogas, viz.. Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga.

The Gita is the cream of the Vedas. It is the essence of the Upanishads. It is the universal scripture for all people of all temperaments and for all times. It is a wonderful book with sublime thoughts and practical instructions on Yoga, devotion, Vedanta and action. It is a marvellous book, profound in thoughts and sublime in heights of vision. It gives peace and solace to the souls who are afflicted by the three fires (*Taapas*) of this mortal world (*Samsara*), viz., *Adhyatmika* (afflictions caused by one's own body), *Adhibhautika* (those caused by beings around one) and *Adhidaivika* (those caused by the gods).

The teachings of the Gita are broad, universal and sublime. Its teachings do not belong to any cult, sect, creed, particular age, place or country. They are meant for the people of the whole world at large. The teachings are based on the Upanishads, the ancient wisdom of the seers (Rishis) and sages. It teaches a method which is within the reach of all. It has a message for the solace, peace, freedom, salvation and perfection of all human beings.

The Gita-gospel was given over five thousand years ago on the battle-field of Kurukshetra, by Lord Krishna to Arjuna. The whole world is a big battle-field. The real Kurukshetra is within you. The battle of Mahabharata is still raging within you. Ignorance (*Avidya*) is Dhritarashtra. The individual soul is Arjuna. The Indweller Who dwells in your heart is Lord Krishna, the charioteer. The body is your chariot. The senses (*Indriyas*) are the horses. The mind, egoism, senses, *Samskaras* (mental impressions), *Vasanas* (latent tendencies), cravings, *Raga-Dvesha* (likes and dislikes), lust, jealousy, greed, pride and hypocrisy are your dire enemies.

The Gita gives you practical lessons to regulate your daily life and conduct. It tells you how to overcome the above enemies, how to develop the divine virtues which will help you to attain God-

consciousness. The message of the Gita is the message of sacrifice, love and duty. Love all. Share what you have with others. Do your duties well. Rise above petty likes and dislikes. Keep open the portals of your heart by removing selfishness, greed and lust, so that the Supreme Lord Himself may come and dwell therein. These are the lessons of the Gita.

THE NEED FOR A TEACHER

As the Gita contains subtle and profound teachings, you should study it under a qualified teacher, a Brahma-nishtha Guru, with great faith, single-minded devotion and purity. Then only the truths of the Gita will be revealed unto you like the Amalaka fruit in the hand. Good commentaries like Swami Madhusudana's Gita, Sri Swami Sankarananda's Gita, Sri Sankara's commentary, etc., written by realised sages, will be of immense help to you.

Lord Krishna speaks from different levels of consciousness. Therefore, the help of a teacher is necessary if you wish to know the right significance of the Slokas. You cannot rightly comprehend the meaning of the verses of the Gita without the help of a teacher. Otherwise, you will be like the man who brought a horse before one who asked for 'Saindhava' when he was taking his food. 'Saindhava' means 'salt' as well as 'a horse'.

Study of the Gita alone is sufficient for the purpose of daily *Svadhyaya* (scriptural study). You will find a solution here for all your doubts. The more you study with devotion and faith, the more you will get deeper knowledge, penetrative insight and clear right thinking. Even if you live in the spirit of one verse of the Gita, all your miseries will come to an end and you will attain the goal of life — Immortality and Eternal Peace.

The eighteen chapters of the Gita are divided into three sections, illustrative of the three terms of the *Mahavakya* or the Great Sentence of the Sama Veda, *Tat-Tvam-Asi* (That Thou Art). In accordance with this view, the first six chapters deal with the path

of action or Karma Yoga and the nature of “Thou” or the *Tvam-Pada*. The next six chapters explain the path of devotion or Bhakti Yoga and the nature of “That” or *Tat-Pada*. The last six chapters treat of the path of knowledge or Jnana Yoga and the nature of the term “Art” or *Asi-Pada* which establishes the identity of the individual and the Supreme Soul, *Jiva-Brahma-Aikya*.

THE TEACHING OF THE GITA

Man is a composite of three fundamental factors, viz., cognition, feeling and will. There are people with three kinds of temperaments, viz., the active temperament, the emotional temperament and the rational temperament. So, there are the three Yogas, viz., Jnana Yoga for the man of enquiry and self-analysis or rational temperament, Bhakti Yoga for the man of emotional temperament, and Karma Yoga for the man of active temperament. One Yoga is as efficacious as the other.

The Gita, therefore, formulates the theory of the three *Margas* (paths), viz., the Jnana Marga, the Bhakti Marga and the Karma Marga, to suit to people of all temperaments. According to the teaching of the Gita, there is no conflict among the three. The Gita harmonises wonderfully the philosophy of action, devotion and knowledge. All the three must be harmoniously blended if you wish to attain perfection. You should have the head of Sri Sankara, the heart of Lord Buddha and the hand of Raja Janaka. The three horses of this body-chariot — action, emotion and intellect — should work in perfect harmony. Only then will this body-chariot move smoothly and you can reach the destination safely and quickly. Only then can you rejoice in the Self within. Only then can you sing the song of *Soham* (I am He). Only then can you be in tune with the Infinite. Only then can you hear the soundless voice of the soul and enjoy the sweet internal music of the Self.

The central teaching of the Gita is the attainment of the final beatitude of life or perfection or Freedom (*Moksha*) by doing the duties of life or one’s *Svadharma*. The Lord says to Arjuna:

“Therefore without attachment, do thou always perform action which should be done; for by performing action without attachment man reaches the Supreme.”

The Gita emphasises again and again that one should cultivate an attitude of non-attachment or detachment. It urges repeatedly that one should live in the world like the lotus-leaf, which is unaffected by water. He who acts placing all actions in the Eternal, abandoning attachment, is as unaffected by sin as a lotus-leaf by water — *Padmapatramivambhasa..*

Attachment is due to Moha. Attachment is the offspring of the quality of Rajas. Non-attachment is born of Sattva. Attachment is an *Asuri-Sampat*, demoniacal quality. Non-attachment is a *Daivi-Sampat*, divine attribute. Attachment is born of ignorance, selfishness and passion. Attachment brings death. Non-attachment is wisdom. Non-attachment brings freedom. Practice of detachment is a rigorous discipline indeed. You will have to practise it again and again. You may tumble down like a baby who is just learning to walk, but you will have to rise up again with a smile and a cheerful heart. Failures are not stumbling blocks, but stepping-stones to success. Try to dwell always in your own Self. Abide in your own Self. Abide in your centre, Think of the Self constantly. All attachments will die automatically. Attachment to God or Atman is a potent antidote to annihilate all worldly attachments. He who has no attachment can really love others. He has pure love or divine Prema. Therefore, without attachment, constantly perform action which is duty, for, by performing actions without attachment, man verily reaches the Supreme.

GITA JAYANTI

By the grace of Bhagavan Vyasa this unique Gospel of the Gita was revealed to the world by Sanjaya on the eleventh day (*Ekadasi*) of the bright half of the Margasirsha month (December) according to the Hindu almanac. This day is celebrated as the Gita Jayanti or the Birthday of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, throughout

India by all admirers and lovers of this wonderful treasure of wisdom.

Worship the Srimad Bhagavad Gita as a holy scripture. Study a chapter from it daily. But, stop not with that. Live in the spirit of the teachings of the Gita. Mere talk and lecture will not help you in any way. You may know the whole of the Gita by heart; you may deliver lectures on the Gita for hours together; and yet, you may not have a ray of the wisdom of the Gita. What is wanted is regular practice of the teachings of the Gita. Become intensely practical. Let the Gita guide your thoughts, prompt your speech, and rule your actions. Then your whole attitude towards life will be gradually changed. You will become a God-man with God-vision. You will no more be perturbed by success or failure, pleasure or pain, loss or gain. You will attain courage, strength, peace and bliss in this very life, right where you are. May the blessings of Lord Krishna be upon you all!

16. THE PURANAS

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

THE FRIENDLY TREATISES

The *Puranas* are of the same class as the *Itihasas* (the Ramayana, Mahabharata, etc.). They have five characteristics (*Pancha Lakshana*), viz., history, cosmology (with various symbolical illustrations of philosophical principles), secondary creation, genealogy of kings, and of Manvantaras. All the *Puranas* belong to the class of *Suhrit-Sammitas*, or the Friendly Treatises, while the *Vedas* are called the *Prabhu-Sammitas* or the Commanding Treatises with great authority.

Vyasa is the compiler of the *Puranas* from age to age; and for this age, he is Krishna-Dvaipayana, the son of Parasara.

The *Puranas* were written to popularise the religion of the *Vedas*. They contain the essence of the *Vedas*. The aim of the *Puranas* is to impress on the minds of the masses the teachings of the *Vedas* and to generate in them devotion to God, through concrete examples, myths, stories, legends, lives of saints, kings and great men, allegories

and chronicles of great historical events. The sages made use of these things to illustrate the eternal principles of religion. The *Puranas* were meant, not for the scholars, but for the ordinary people who could not understand high philosophy and who could not study the *Vedas*.

The Darsanas or schools of philosophy are very stiff. They are meant only for the learned few. The *Puranas* are meant for the masses with inferior intellect. Religion is taught in a very easy and interesting way through the *Puranas*. Even to this day, the *Puranas* are popular. The *Puranas* contain the history of remote times. They also give a description of the regions of the universe not visible to the ordinary physical eye. They are very interesting to read and are full of information of all kinds. Children hear the stories from their grandmothers. Pundits and Purohits hold *Kathas* or religious discourses in temples, on banks of rivers and in other important places. Agriculturists, labourers and bazaar people hear the stories.

EIGHTEEN PURANAS

There are eighteen main *Puranas* and an equal number of subsidiary *Puranas* or *Upa-Puranas*. The main *Puranas* are: Vishnu *Purana*, Naradiya *Purana*, Srimad Bhagavata *Purana*, Garuda (Suparna) *Purana*, Padma *Purana*, Varaha *Purana*, Brahma *Purana*, Brahmanda *Purana*, Brahma Vaivarta *Purana*, Markandeya *Purana*, Bhavishya *Purana*, Vamana *Purana*, Matsya *Purana*, Kurma *Purana*, Linga *Purana*, Siva *Purana*, Skanda *Purana* and Agni *Purana*. Of these, six are Sattvic *Puranas* and glorify Vishnu; six are Rajasic and glorify Brahma; six are Tamasic and they glorify Siva.

Neophytes or beginners in the spiritual path are puzzled when they go through Siva *Purana* and Vishnu *Purana*. In Siva *Purana*, Lord Siva is highly eulogised and an inferior position is given to Lord Vishnu. Sometimes Vishnu is belittled. In Vishnu *Purana*, Lord Hari is highly eulogised and an inferior status is given to Lord Siva. Sometimes Lord Siva is belittled. This is only to increase the faith of the devotees in their particular Ishta-Devata. Lord Siva and Lord Vishnu are one.

The best among the Puranas are the Srimad Bhagavata and the Vishnu Purana. The most popular is the Srimad Bhagavata Purana. Next comes Vishnu Purana. A portion of the Markandeya Purana is well known to all Hindus as *Chandi*, or *Devimahatmya*. Worship of God as the Divine Mother is its theme. Chandi is read widely by the Hindus on sacred days and Navaratri (Durga Puja) days.

TEN AVATARAS AND THEIR PURPOSE

The Srimad Bhagavata Purana is a chronicle of the various Avatars of Lord Vishnu. There are ten Avatars of Vishnu. The aim of every Avatar is to save the world from some great danger, to destroy the wicked and protect the virtuous. The ten Avatars are: *Matsya* (The Fish), *Kurma* (The Tortoise), *Varaha* (The Boar), *Narasimha* (The Man-Lion), *Vamana* (The Dwarf), *Parasurama* (Rama with the axe, the destroyer of the Kshatriya race), *Ramachandra* (the hero of the Ramayana — the son of Dasaratha, who destroyed Ravana), *Sri Krishna*, the teacher of the Gita, *Buddha* (the prince-ascetic, founder of Buddhism), and *Kalki* (the hero riding on a white horse, who is to come at the end of the Kali-Yuga).

The object of the Matsya Avatar was to save Vaivasvata Manu from destruction by a deluge. The object of Kurma Avatar was to enable the world to recover some precious things which were lost in the deluge. The Kurma gave its back for keeping the churning rod when the Gods and the Asuras churned the ocean of milk. The purpose of Varaha Avatar was to rescue, from the waters, the earth which had been dragged down by a demon named Hiranyaksha. The purpose of Narasimha Avatar, half-lion and half-man, was to free the world from the oppression of Hiranyakasipu, a demon, the father of Bhakta Prahallada. The object of Vamana Avatar was to restore the power of the gods which had been eclipsed by the penance and devotion of King Bali. The object of Parasurama Avatar was to deliver the country from the oppression of the Kshatriya rulers. Parasurama destroyed the Kshatriya race twenty-one times. The object of Rama Avatar was to destroy the

wicked Ravana. The object of Sri Krishna Avatar was to destroy Kamsa and other demons, to deliver His wonderful message of the Gita in the Mahabharata war, and to become the centre of the Bhakti schools of India. The object of Buddha Avatar was to prohibit animal sacrifices and teach piety. The object of the Kalki Avatar is the destruction of the wicked and the re-establishment of virtue.

LILAS OF LORD SIVA

Lord Siva incarnated himself in the form of Dakshinamurti to impart knowledge to the four Kumaras. He took human form to initiate Sambandhar, Manikkavasagar, Pattinathar. He appeared in flesh and blood to help his devotees and relieve their sufferings. The divine *Lilas* or sports of Lord Siva are recorded in the Tamil Puranas like Siva Purana, Periya Purana, Siva Parakramam and Tiruvilayadal Purana.

The eighteen Upa-Puranas are : Sanatkumara, Narasimha, Brihannaradi, Sivarahasya, Durvasa, Kapila, Vamana, Bhargava, Varuna, Kalika, Samba, Nandi, Surya, Parasara, Vasishtha, Devi-Bhagavata, Ganesa and Hamsa.

Study of the Puranas, listening to sacred recitals of scriptures, describing and expounding of the transcendent Lilas of the Blessed Lord — these form an important part of Sadhana of the Lord's devotees. It is most pleasing to the Lord. *Sravana* is a part of *Navavidha-Bhakti*. *Kathas* and *Upanyasas* open the springs of devotion in the hearts of hearers and develop *Prema Bhakti* which confers immortality on the Jiva.

The language of the Vedas is archaic, and the subtle philosophy of Vedanta and the Upanishads is extremely difficult to grasp and assimilate. Hence, the Puranas are of special value as they present philosophical truths and precious teachings in an easier manner. They give ready access to the mysteries of life and the key to bliss. Imbibe their teachings. Start a new life of *Dharma-Nishtha* and *Adhyatmic Sadhana* from this very day, and attain Immortality.

17. THE AGAMAS

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

INTRODUCTION

Another class of popular scriptures are the *Agamas*. The Agamas are theological treatises and practical manuals of divine worship. The Agamas include the *Tantras*, *Mantras* and *Yantras*. These are treatises explaining the external worship of God, in idols, temples, etc. All the Agamas treat of (i) *Jnana* or Knowledge, (ii) *Yoga* or Concentration, (iii) *Kriya* or Esoteric Ritual and (iv) *Charya* or Exoteric Worship. They also give elaborate details about ontology and cosmology, liberation, devotion, meditation, philosophy of Mantras, mystic diagrams, charms and spells, temple-building, image-making, domestic observances, social rules, public festivals, etc.

DIVISIONS OF THE AGAMAS

The Agamas are divided into three sections : the *Vaishnava*, the *Saiva* and the *Sakta*. The three chief sects of Hinduism, viz., Vaishnavism, Saivism and Saktism, base their doctrines and dogmas on their respective Agamas. The Vaishnava Agamas or Pancharatra Agamas glorify God as Vishnu. The Saiva Agamas glorify God as Siva and have given rise to an important school of philosophy known as Saiva-Siddhanta, which prevails in South India, particularly in the districts of Tirunelveli and Madurai. The Sakta Agamas or Tantras glorify God as the Mother of the Universe, under one of the many names of Devi.

The Agamas do not derive their authority from the Vedas, but are not antagonistic to them. They are all Vedic in spirit and character. That is the reason why they are regarded as authoritative.

VAISHNAVAGAMAS

The Vaishnava Agamas are of four kinds: the Vaikhanasa, Pancharatra, Pratishtasara and Vijnanalalita. The Brahma, Saiva, Kaumara, Vasishtha, Kapila, Gautamiya and the Naradiya are the seven groups of the Pancharatras. The Naradiya section of the Santi-Parva of the Mahabharata is the earliest source of information about the Pancharatras.

Vishnu is the Supreme Lord in the Pancharatra Agamas. The Vaishnavas regard the Pancharatra Agamas to be the most authoritative. They believe that these Agamas were revealed by Lord Vishnu Himself. Narada-Pancharatra says: "Everything from Brahman to a blade of grass is Lord Krishna." This corresponds to the Upanishadic declaration: "All this is, verily, Brahman—*Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma*."

There are two hundred and fifteen of these Vaishnava texts. Isvara, Ahirbudhnya, Paushkara, Parama, Sattvata, Brihad-Brahma and Jnanamritasara Samhitas are the important ones.

SAIVA AGAMAS

The Saivas recognise twenty-eight Agamas, of which the chief is Kamika. The Agamas are also the basis of Kashmir Saivism which is called the Pratyabhijna system. The latter works of Pratyabhijna system show a distinct leaning to Advaitism. The Southern Saivism, i.e., Saiva Siddhanta, and the Kashmir Saivism, regard these Agamas as their authority, besides the Vedas. Each Agama has Upa-Agamas. Of these, only fragmentary texts of twenty are extant. Lord Siva is the central God in the Saiva Agamas. They are suitable to this age, Kali Yuga. They are open to all castes and both the sexes.

SAKTA AGAMAS

There is another group of scriptures known as the *Tantras*. They belong to the Sakta cult. They glorify *Sakti* as the World-Mother. They dwell on the *Sakti* (energy) aspect of God and prescribe numerous courses of ritualistic worship of the Divine Mother in various forms. There are seventy-seven Agamas. These are very much like the Puranas in some respects. The texts are usually in the form of dialogues between Siva and Parvati. In some of these, Siva answers the questions put by Parvati, and in others, Parvati answers, Siva questioning. Mahanirvana, Kularnava, Kulasara, Prapanchasara, Tantraraja, Rudra-Yamala, Brahma-Yamala, Vishnu-Yamala and Todala Tantra are the important works. The Agamas teach several occult practices some of which confer

powers, while the others bestow knowledge and freedom. Sakti is the creative power of Lord Siva. Saktism is really a supplement to Saivism.

Among the existing books on the Agamas, the most famous are the Isvara-Samhita, Ahirbudhnya-Samhita, Sanatkumara-Samhita, Narada-Pancharatra, Spanda-Pradipika and the Mahanirvana-Tantra.

18. THE DARSANAS (SWAMI SIVANANDA) WHAT IS DARSANA

The six scriptures of the Hindus are: (i) Srutis, (ii) Smritis, (iii) Itihasas, (iv) Puranas, (v) Agamas, and (vi) Darsanas. While the first four are intuitive, and the fifth inspirational and emotional, the Darsanas are the intellectual section of the Hindu writings. Darsanas are schools of philosophy based on the Vedas. The Agamas are theological. The Darsana literature is philosophical. The Darsanas are meant for the erudite scholars who are endowed with acute acumen, good understanding, power of reasoning and subtle intellect. The Itihasas, Puranas and Agamas are meant for the masses. The Darsanas appeal to the intellect, while the Itihasas, Puranas, etc., appeal to the heart.

Philosophy has six divisions —*Shad-Darsana*—, the six Darsanas or ways of *seeing* things, usually called the six systems or six different schools of thought. The six schools of philosophy are the six instruments of true teaching or the six demonstrations of Truth. Each school has developed, systematised and correlated the various parts of the Vedas in its own way. Each system has its *Sutrakara*, i.e., the one great Rishi who systematised the doctrines of the school and put them in short aphorisms or Sutras.

SUTRAS AND COMMENTARIES

The Sutras are terse and laconic. The Rishis have condensed their thoughts in the aphorisms. It is very difficult to understand them without the help of commentaries by great sages or Rishis. Hence,

there arose many commentators or *Bhashyakaras*. There are glosses, notes and, later, commentaries on the original commentaries. Each set of Sutras has, therefore, got its *Bhashya*, *Vritti*, *Varttika*, *Vyakhyan* or *Tika* and *Tippa*.

A *Sutra* or an aphorism is a short formula with the least possible number of letters, without any ambiguity or doubtful assertion, containing the very essence, embracing all meanings, without any stop or obstruction and absolutely faultless in nature. A *Bhashya* is an elaborate exposition, a commentary on the Sutras, with word by word meaning of the aphoristic precepts, their running translation, together with the individual views of the commentator or the *Bhashyakara*. A *Vritti* is a short gloss explaining the aphorisms in a more elaborate way, but not as extensively as a *Bhashya*. A *Varttika* is a work where a critical study is made of that which is said and left unsaid or imperfectly said in a *Bhashya*, and the ways of making it perfect by supplying the omissions therein, are given. A *Vyakhyan* or *Tika* is a running explanation in a easier language of what is said in the original, with little elucidations here and there. *Tippa* is just like a *Vritti*, but is less orthodox than the *Vritti*. It is an explanation of difficult words or phrases occurring in the original.

THE SIX SYSTEMS OF PHILOSOPHY

Gautama Rishi systematised the principles of *Nyaya* or the Indian logical system. Kanada composed the *Vaisesika Sutras*. Kapila Muni founded the *Sankhya* system. Patanjali Maharshi is the first systematiser of the Yoga school; he composed his *Yoga Sutras*. The Yoga-Darsana of Patanjali is a celebrated text-book on Raja Yoga. Jaimini, a disciple of Vyasa, composed the Sutras of the *Mimamsa* school, which is based on the ritual-sections of the Vedas. Badarayana composed his famous *Vedanta-Sutras* or *Brahma-Sutras* which expound the teachings of the Upanishads. The different schools of the Vedanta have built their philosophy on the foundation of these Sutras.

DIFFERENT WAYS OF APPROACH TO THE SAME GOAL

The six schools of thought are like the six different roads which lead to one city. You may go to Bombay by train or aeroplane or car or bus or any other vehicle. Even so, you can reach the goal of life through Yoga, or Vedanta, or any other path. The methods or ways of approach to the Goal are different to suit people of different temperaments, capacities and mental calibre. But they all have one aim, viz., removal of ignorance and its effects of pain and sufferings, and the attainment of freedom, perfection, immortality and eternal bliss by union of the individual soul (Jivatman) with the Supreme Soul (Paramatman).

No student of Hinduism ought to be satisfied without acquiring a clear and accurate knowledge of the principal distinguishing characteristics of the six philosophical schools. The more advanced scholar should study the original Sutras in which the doctrines of each school are enunciated. Study of the six schools of philosophy will sharpen, the intellect and give you vast knowledge. You will have a clear and comprehensive understanding of the Truth. Each system is a step or rung in the spiritual ladder.

INTERRELATION BETWEEN THE SIX SYSTEMS

The six schools are divided into three groups: (i) the Nyaya and the Vaisesika, (ii) the Sankhya and the Yoga, and (iii) the Mimamsa, and the Vedanta. The Vaisesika is a supplement of the Nyaya. The Yoga is a supplement of the Sankhya. The Vedanta is an amplification and fulfilment of the Sankhya. Study of Vyakarana (grammar), Mimamsa, Nyaya and Sankhya sharpens the intellect and enables the aspirants to grasp the Vedanta. The Nyaya is considered as a prerequisite for all philosophical enquiry.

The Vaisesika is not very much in honour now. The Nyaya is popular. The Sankhya is not a living faith. The Yoga is practised by a few in its practical form. The Vedanta is the most popular of all the schools today.

The Nyaya and the Vaisesika will give you an analysis of the world of experience. They arrange all things of the world into

certain kinds or categories (*Padarthas*). They explain how God has made all this material world out of atoms and molecules. They show the way to attain knowledge of God. The Sankhya will provide you with deep knowledge on Hindu psychology. Kapila Muni was the father of psychology. The Yoga deals with the control of *Vrittis*, or thought-waves, and with meditation. The Yoga system shows the ways to discipline the mind and the senses. The Yoga will help you to cultivate concentration and one-pointedness of mind and enter into *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* or the Superconscious State. The Purva-Mimamsa deals with the Karma-Kanda of the Vedas, and the Uttara-Mimamsa with the Jnana-Kanda. The Uttara-Mimamsa is also known as the Vedanta-Darsana. This is the corner-stone of Hinduism. The Vedanta philosophy explains in detail the nature of Brahman or the Eternal Being, and shows that the individual soul is, in essence, identical with the Supreme Self. It gives methods to remove *Avidya* or the veil of ignorance and to merge oneself in the ocean of bliss or Brahman.

The Nyaya calls ignorance *Mithya Jnana*, false knowledge. The Sankhya styles it *Aviveka*, non-discrimination between the real and the unreal. The Vedanta names it *Avidya*, nescience. Each philosophy aims at its eradication by Knowledge or Jnana. Then one attains eternal bliss or immortality.

By study of Nyaya and Vaisesika, one learns to utilise his intellect to find out fallacies and to know the material constitution of the world. By study of Sankhya, one understands the course of evolution. By study and practice of Yoga, one gains self-restraint and obtains mastery over mind and senses. By practice of Vedanta, one reaches the highest rung of the ladder of spirituality or the pinnacle of divine glory, oneness with the Supreme Being, by the destruction of ignorance (*Avidya*).

VEDANTA — THE MOST SATISFACTORY SYSTEM OF PHILOSOPHY

Some of the doctrines of the Nyaya, the Vaisesika, the Sankhya and the Yoga are opposed to the teaching of the Vedas.

These systems are only superficially based on the Vedas. The Nyaya and the Vaisesika schools rely too much on human reason, though they accept the Vedas as the supreme authority. Human intellect is frail and finite. It has got its limitations. It functions within time, space and causation. Its findings cannot be infallible. It cannot solve transcendental matters. Vedas only are infallible and authoritative. They contain the revelations or direct intuitional experiences of Seers and Rishis. These experiences will tally with the experiences of those who have attained Knowledge of the Self (Brahma-Jnana).

The Vedanta is the most satisfactory system of philosophy. It has been evolved out of the Upanishads. It has superseded all other schools. The Mimamsa school has laid great stress on rituals, or Karma Kanda. According to the Mimamsa school, Karma or ritual is all-in-all in the Veda. *Upasana* (worship) and *Jnana* (knowledge) are only accessories to Karma. This view is refuted by the Vedanta school. According to the Vedanta, Self-realisation (*Jnana*) is the foremost thing, and ritual and worship are accessories. Karma will take one to heaven which is only an impermanent place of refined sensual enjoyment. Karma cannot destroy the cycle of births and deaths, and cannot give eternal bliss and immortality.

During the time of Sankaracharya, all the six schools of philosophy flourished. Therefore, he had to refute the other systems in order to establish his absolute monism (Kevala Advaita). But, nowadays, Sankhya, Vaisesika, etc., are in name only. Even now, some Hindu preachers, Sannyasins and Mandalesvars try to establish Advaita Vedanta by refuting these old systems. This is a mistake. They will have to refute at the present moment materialism, agnosticism, atheism and science, and then establish Advaita Vedanta.

OTHER SCRIPTURES

The *Tevaram* and the *Tiruvachakam* which are the hymns of the Saiva saints of South India; the *Divya-Prabandham* of the Alvar or Vaishnava saints of South India; the songs of Kabir; the *Abhangas* of Tukaram and the *Ramayana* of Tulasi Das — all of

which are the outpourings of great realised souls — are wonderful scriptures. They contain the essence of the Vedas.

19. BRAHMA SUTRAS

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

INTRODUCTION

Hari Om! Salutations to Sri Vyasa, the Avatara of Vishnu, the wise Badarayana and Sri Krishna Dwaipayana.

Vedas consist of three portions viz., the *Karma-Kanda* which deals with sacrifices or ceremonial rites, the *Upasana-Kanda* which treats of Upasana (worship) and the *Jnana-Kanda* which deals with knowledge of Brahman. Karma-Kanda represents the feet of a man, Upasana-Kanda the heart, and the Jnana-Kanda the head. Just as the head is the most important portion of a man, so also the Upanishads which treat of the knowledge portion of the Vedas is the head of the Vedas. Hence it is said to be the *Shir* (head) of Vedas.

Mimamsa means the investigation or enquiry into the connected meaning of the sacred texts. Of this Mimamsa two branches have been recognised, the *Purva Mimamsa* (earlier) and the *Uttara Mimamsa* (the latter). The former systematises the Karma-Kanda — the portion of the Vedas which pertains to action and sacrifices and which comprises the *Samhitas* and the *Brahmanas*; the latter systematises the Jnana-Kanda i.e., that part of the Vedas which includes the *Aranyaka* portion of the Brahmanas and the *Upanishads*. Jaimini is the author of the Purva Mimamsa. Sri Vyasa (Badarayana or Krishna Dwaipayana), the Guru of Jaimini, is the author of the Brahma Sutras otherwise known as the Vedanta Sutras. The study of Brahma Sutras is a synthetic study of the Upanishads. It treats of the Vedanta Philosophy.

The Vedas are eternal. They were not written by any individual. They came out from the breath of Hiranyagarbha (Lord Brahma). Vedanta is the end or gist of the Vedas. It deals with the

knowledge portion. Vedanta is not mere speculation. It is the authentic record of transcendental experiences or direct and actual realisation of the great Rishis or Seers. Brahma Sutras is the Science of the Soul.

THE NEED AND PURPOSE

Sutras are concise aphorisms. They give the essence of the arguments on a topic. Maximum of thought is compressed or condensed into these Sutras in as few words as possible. It is easy to remember them. Great intellectual people only, with realisation, can compose Sutras. They are clues or aids to memory. They cannot be understood without a lucid commentary (*Bhashya*). The commentary also is in need of further elaborate explanation. Thus the interpretations of the Sutras gave rise to various kinds of literary writings such as *Vrittis* (gloss) and *Karikas*. The different Acharyas (founders of different schools of thought) have given their own interpretations of the Sutras to establish their own doctrines. The *Bhashya* of Sri Sankara on Brahma Sutras is known as *Sareeraka Bhashya*. His school of thought is *Kevala Adwaita*. The *Bhashya* of Sri Ramanuja who founded the *Visishtadwaita* school is called *Sri Bhashya*. The commentary of Sri Nimbarkacharya is known as *Vedanta Prijata Saurabha*. Sri Vallabhacharya expounded his system of philosophy known as *Suddhadwaita* (pure monism) and his commentary on the Brahma Sutras is known as *Anu Bhashya*.

Sanskrit is very elastic. It is like Kamadhenu or Kalpataru. You can milk out of it various kinds of *Rasas* according to your intellectual calibre and spiritual experiences. Therefore different Acharyas have built different systems of thought or cults by interpreting the Sutras in their own ways and became founders of sects. Madhva founded his own system of *Dwaita*. The cults of Vishnu known as Bhagawat or Pancharatra and those of Siva, Pasupata or Maheswara have interpreted Brahma Sutras in accordance with their own tenets. Nimbarkacharya interpreted the Vedanta system from the standpoint of *Bhedabhedava-*

Dwaitadwaitita. He was largely influenced by the teachings of Bhaskara who flourished in the first half of the ninth century. The theory held by Bhaskara and Nimbarka was held by the ancient teacher Audulomi. Badarayana himself refers to this theory in his Brahma Sutras.

There are more than fourteen commentaries on the Brahma Sutras. Sri Appayya Dikshita rendered the commentary of Sri Sankara more clear by his *Parimala*, Sri Vachaspathimisra by his work *Bhamati* and Sri Amalananda Saraswati by his *Kalpa-taru*.

The erroneous identification of the body with the pure Atman is the root cause for human sufferings and miseries, for births and deaths. You identify yourself with the body and say: "I am fair, dark, stout or thin. I am a Brahmin, I am a Kshatriya, I am a doctor." You identify yourself with the senses and say: "I am blind, I am dumb." You identify yourself with the mind and say: "I know nothing. I know everything. I became angry. I enjoyed a good meal. I am suffering from this disease." The entire object of the Brahma Sutras is to remove this erroneous identification of the Soul with the body which is the root cause of your suffering and miseries, which is the product of *Avidya* (ignorance) and help you in the attainment of the final emancipation through knowledge of Brahman.

The Upanishads seem to be full of contradictions at first. They do not contain consistent system of thought. Sri Vyasa systematised the thoughts or philosophy of the Upanishads in his Brahma Sutras. The Sutras reconcile the conflicting statements of the Upanishads. In reality there are no conflicts for the thinker. The different views expressed in the Upanishads represent the different stages of the development of thought. Audulomi and Asmarathyā also did this work in their own way and founded their own schools of thought.

BRAHMA SUTRAS AND THE ACHARYAS

Those who wish to study the philosophy of Vedanta should

study the Ten Classical Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras. All Acharyas have commented on Brahma Sutras. This is a great authority for every philosophical school in India. If any Acharya wishes to establish his own cult or sect or school of thought, he will have to write a commentary of his own on Brahma Sutras. Then only it will be recognised.

The five great Acharyas — Sri Sankara, the exponent of Kevala Adwaita or uncompromising monism; Sri Ramanuja, the exponent of Visishtadwaita or qualified monism; Sri Nimbarka, the exponent of Bhed-abheda Vada; Sri Madhva, the exponent of strict Dwaitism or Dwaita Vada; and Sri Vallabha, the exponent of Suddhadwaita Vada or pure monism — agree that Brahman is the cause of this world and that knowledge of Brahman leads to Moksha or the final emancipation, which is the goal of life. They also emphatically declare that Brahman can be known only through the scriptures and not through mere reasoning. But they differ amongst themselves as to the nature of this Brahman, the state of the soul in the state of final emancipation, the means of attaining It and Its causality with reference to this universe.

SANKARA

According to Sri Sankara there is one Absolute Brahman Who is Satchidananda, Who is of an absolutely homogeneous nature. The appearance of this world is due to *Maya* — the illusory power of Brahman — which is neither *Sat* nor *Asat*. This world is unreal. This world is a *Vivarta* or apparent modification through *Maya*. Brahman is the only Reality. The individual soul has limited himself through *Avidya* and identification with the body and other vehicles. Through his selfish actions he enjoys the fruits of his actions. He becomes the actor and enjoyer. He regards himself as atomic and as an agent on account of *Avidya* or the limiting *Antahkarana*. The individual soul becomes identical with Brahman when his *Avidya* is destroyed. In reality Jiva is all-pervading and identical with Brahman. Ishvara or Saguna Brahman is a product of *Maya*. Worship of Ishvara

leads to *Krama Mukti*. The pious devotees (the knowers of Saguna, Brahman) go to Brahma Loka and attain final release through highest knowledge. They do not return to this world. They attain the Nirguna Brahman at the end of the cycle. Knowledge of Nirguna Brahman is the only means of liberation. The knowers of Nirguna Brahman attain immediate final release or *Sadyomukti*. They need not go by the path of Gods or the Devayana. They merge themselves in Para Brahman. They do not go to any Loka or world. Sri Sankara's Brahman is *Nirvisesha*, Brahman (Impersonal Absolute) without attributes.

RAMANUJA

According to Sri Ramanuja Brahman is with attributes (*Savisesha*). He is endowed with all auspicious qualities. He is not merely intelligence itself, but intelligence is also his chief attribute. He contains within Himself whatever exists. World and individual souls are essential real constituents of Brahman's nature. Matter (Achit) and soul (Chit) form the body of the Lord, Lord Narayana, who is the Inner Ruler (Antaryamin). Matter and souls are called modes of Him (*Prakara*). The individual souls will never be entirely resolved in Brahman. According to Ramanuja Brahman is not absolutely one and homogeneous. The individual souls undergo a state of *Sankocha* (contraction) during *Pralaya*. They expand (*Vikasa*) during creation, Sri Ramanuja's Brahman is a Personal God with attributes. The individual soul of Ramanuja is really individual. It will remain a personality for ever. The soul remains in *Vaikuntha* for ever in a state of bliss and enjoys the divine *Aishvarya* of Lord Narayana. Bhakti is the chief means to final emancipation and not *Jnana*. Sri Ramanuja follows in his Bhashya the authority of Bodhayana.

NIMBARKA

According to Sri Nimbarkacharya Brahman is considered as both the efficient and material cause of the world. Brahman is both Nirguna and Saguna. The universe is not unreal or illusory but

is a true manifestation or *Parinama* of Brahman. (Sri Ramanuja also holds this view. He says, "Just as milk is transformed into curd, so also Brahman has transformed Himself as this universe.") This world is identical with and at the same time different from Brahman, just as the wave or bubble is the same and at the same time different from water. The individual souls are parts of the Supreme Self. They are controlled by the Supreme Being. The final salvation lies in realising the true nature of one's own soul. This can be achieved by *Bhakti* (devotion). The individuality of the finite self (*Jivatma*) is not dissolved even in the state of final emancipation. Sri Ramanuja also holds that the Jiva assumes the divine body of Sri Narayana with four hands and enjoys in Vaikuntha the divine Aishwarya of the Lord.

VALLABHA

The philosophy of Sri Vallabhacharya is *Suddha-Advaita* or pure monism, because he does not admit *Maya* like Sankara, and believes that the whole world of matter and souls is real and is only a subtle form of God. Those who bring *Maya* for the explanation of the world are not pure Advaitins, because they admit a second to Brahman. Vallabha holds that Brahman can create the world without any connection with such a principle as *Maya*, but Sankara traces the universe to Brahman through the power of *Maya*. Hence the philosophy of Vallabha is called pure monism or *Suddhadvaita*.

Vallabha says that the entire universe is real and is subtly Brahman. The individual souls and the world are, in essence, one with Brahman. Jiva, Kala (time) and Prakriti or *Maya* are eternal existences, but they have not separate existence apart from Brahman.

Vallabha's religion is a religion addressed to the worship of Vishnu in the form of Krishna. It was derived chiefly, like the system of Chaitanya, from the Vaishnava philosophy propounded by Ramanuja. It is centred round the conception of a personal and beneficent God who is *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. Lord Krishna is the highest Brahman. His body consists of *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. He is called Purushottama.

Vallabha's followers worship Bala-Krishna (Krishna as a lad). They have *Vatsalya-Bhava* (the attitude which regards God as a child). Vallabha lays great stress on *Pushti* (grace) and *Bhakti* (devotion). *Maha-Pushti* is the highest grace or *Anu-graha* which helps the aspirants to attain God-realisation.

MADHVA

Madhva makes an absolute distinction between God, and animate and inanimate objects. God is the only independent Reality. The animate and inanimate objects are dependent realities. Madhva's Vedanta is the doctrine of absolute differences. It is an *Atyanta-Bheda-Darsana*. He insists on five great distinctions (*Pancha-Bheda*), viz., (i) the distinction between God and the individual soul, (ii) the distinction between God and matter, (iii) the distinction between the individual soul and matter, (iv) the distinction between one soul and another, and (v) the distinction between one material thing and another. Madhva's philosophy is a philosophy of distinction.

In Madhva's system of philosophy, Hari or Vishnu is the Supreme Being. The world is real. Difference is true. All the Jivas are dependent on Hari, the Lord. There are grades of superiority and inferiority among the individual souls. Liberation is the individual soul's enjoyment of its innate bliss. This is Moksha or the final emancipation. *Bhakti*, or devotion, without faults, is the means of attaining Moksha. Perception, inference and the scriptures are the three *Pramanas*, or ways of knowledge. Hari is knowable only through the Vedas. Worship of Lord Krishna as taught in the Bhagavata Purana is the centre of his religion. This is the quintessence of Madhva's teachings.

RECONCILIATION

You may ask why do such great realised souls hold different views, why have they started different cults or systems. The highest philosophy of Sri Sankara which bespeaks the identity of the individual and Supreme Soul cannot be understood by the vast majority of persons. Therefore Sri Madhva and Sri Ramanuja started

their Bhakti cult. The different schools are different rungs in the ladder of Yoga. The student must place his foot step by step and finally reach the highest peak of perfection — the *Kevaladwaita* realisation of Sri Sankara. As temperaments are different, different schools are also necessary to suit the taste, capacity and stage of evolution of the aspirant. Therefore all schools and cults are necessary. They have got their own place and scope.

The views of various Acharyas are all true in respect of the particular aspect of Brahman dealt with by them, each in his own way. Sankara has taken Brahman in His transcendental aspect, while Sri Ramanuja has taken Him chiefly in His immanent aspect. People were following blindly the rituals during the time of Sri Sankara. When he was preparing his commentary he had in view the purpose of combating the baneful effects which blind ritualism produced. He never condemned selfless service or Nishkamya Karma Yoga. He condemned the performance of rituals with selfish motives.

CONCLUSION

Sankara Bhashya is the oldest of all commentaries. It upholds Suddha Para Brahman or the Supreme Self of the Upa-nishads as something superior to other divine beings. It propounds a very bold philosophy and declares emphatically that the individual soul is identical with the Supreme Self. Sankara's philosophical view accurately represents the meaning of Badarayana. His explanations only faithfully render the intended meaning of Sri Vyasa. This is beyond doubt and dispute.

Students of Kevaladwaita School of Philosophy should study the Sareeraka Bhashya of Sri Sankara which is profound, subtle and unique. It is an authority which leads to the right understanding of the Brahma Sutras. The best thinkers of India, Greece, Germany, England and America belong to this school. It occupies a high rank in books on philosophy. Adwaita philosophy is the most sublime and the grandest philosophy of the Hindus.

You can understand the Brahma Sutras if you have a

knowledge of the twelve classical Upanishads. You can understand the second chapter if you have a knowledge of Sankhya, Nyaya, Yoga, Mimamsa, Vaisesika Darshan and Buddhistic school too. All these schools are refuted here by Sri Sankara. Sri Sankara's commentary is the best commentary. Dr. Thibut has translated this commentary. "Brahma Sutras" is one of the books of Prasthanatraya. This is an authoritative book on Hindu Philosophy. The work consists of 4 *Adhyayas* (chapters), 16 *Padas* (sections), 223 *Adhikaranas* (topics), and 564 *Sutras* (aphorisms). The first chapter (*Samanvayadhyaya*) unifies Brahman, the second (*Avirodhadhyaya*) refutes other philosophies, the third (*Sadhanadhyaya*) deals with practice (Sadhana) to attain Brahman and the fourth (*Phaladhyaya*) treats of fruits of Self-realisation. Each chapter contains four Padas. Each Pada contains Adhikaranas. Each Adhikarana has a separate question to discuss. The first five Adhikaranas of the first chapter are very very important.

Glory to Sri Vyasa Bhagavan, son of Parasara, the mighty sage, a Chiranjivi who has written all Puranas and also divided the Vedas. May his blessings be upon you all !

20. THE SECULAR WRITINGS (SWAMI SIVANANDA) THE SUBHASHITAS

The *Subhashitas* are wise sayings, instructions and stories, either in poetry or in prose. Examples are Bhartrihari's three centuries of verses, the Subhashita-Ratna-Bhandagara and Somadeva Bhatta's *Katha-Sarit-Sagara* or Kshemendra's *Brihat-Katha-Manjari*. The *Panchatantra* and the *Hitopadesa* also belong to this category.

THE KAVYAS

These are highly scholarly compositions in poetry, prose or both. The greatest of poetical *Kavyas* are those of Kalidasa (*The Raghuvamsa* and *Kumarasambhava*), Bharavi (*The*

Kiratarjuniya), Magha (*The Sisupalavadha*), and Sri Harsha (*The Naishadha*). The best prose Kavyas in the whole of Sanskrit literature were written by Bhattacharya (*The Kadambari* and *Harshacharita*), the great genius in classical Sanskrit. Among those containing both poetry and prose, the *Champu-Ramayana* and the *Champu-Bharata* are most famous. These are all wonderful masterpieces which will ever remain to glorify India's literary calibre.

THE NATAKAS

These are marvellously scholastic dramas embodying the *Rasas* of *Sringara*, *Vira*, *Karuna*, *Adbhuta*, *Hasya*, *Bhayanaika*, *Bibhatsa* and *Raudra*. It is told that none can write on the ninth Rasa, viz., *Santi*. It is attainable only on final Liberation. The best dramas are written by Kalidasa (*Sakuntala*), Bhavabhuti (*Uttara-Rama Charita*), and Visakhadatta (*Mudrarakshasa*).

THE ALANKARAS

These are grand rhetorical texts, treating of the science of perfection and beauty of ornamental language and of effective composition with elegance and force, both in poetry and in prose. These are the fundamentals of Sanskrit Sahitya, even superior to the Kavyas and the Natakas. The best Alankara-Granthas are those of Mammata (*Kavyaprakasa*) and Jagannatha (*Rasagangadhara*).

CONCLUSION

These constitute the entirety of Sanskrit literature — sacred and secular. The Sruti is the root; the Smritis, Itihasas and Puranas are the trunk; the Agamas and Darsanas are the branches; and the Subhashitas, Kavyas, Natakas and Alankaras are the flowers of the tree of India's Culture.

The Smritis, the Itihasas, the Puranas, the Agamas and the Darsanas are only developments of the Veda. Their ultimate source is the Veda. Their one common aim is to enable man to annihilate his ignorance and attain perfection, freedom, immortality and eternal bliss through knowledge of God or the Eternal. Their purpose is to make man like God and one with Him.

Books suggested for further study

1. Satsanga and Svadhyaya — Swami Sivananda
2. All About Hinduism — Swami Sivananda
